

Sarah Bates reports on the abortion referendum >>Pages 10&11

Giving bigots the boot in Ireland



People died because profits came first >>Pages 4&5

Will inquiry get justice for Grenfell?



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BUILD ON ANTI-RACISTS' SUCCESS IN MANCHESTER



ANTI-RACISTS IN Manchester last Saturday outnumbered the racist Football Lads Alliance that wants to use the anniversary of last year's bombing to spread hatred. Another mobilisation is set for 2 June

>>Page 3

PRIVATISATION

Bosses' care home selloffs cause crisis

THOUSANDS OF older people have been left with an uncertain future following news that Britain's biggest care homes firm is up for sale.

If investors shut down companies they can simply withdraw care. But Britain has an ageing population and these care homes are needed now more than ever.

>>Page 6

MIDDLE EAST



How can Palestine win freedom?

SUPPORTERS OF Israel are already working out how to shift the blame for the slaughter in Gaza.

There has always been Palestinian resistance. The history of Palestinian struggle has involved mass mobilisations but it will take a revolution to get freedom.

>>Pages 14&15

LABOUR

Livingstone's exit victory for the right's demands

KEN Livingstone's resignation is a victory for those who use antisemitism allegations to attack the left.

Livingstone's remarks were poorly phrased but he is not racist or antisemitic. Jeremy Corbyn should have stood up to the pressures.

>>Page 5

RAGE AGAINST TRUMP

PROTEST ON 13 JULY



WARMONGER, racist, sexist and class warrior Donald Trump is coming to Britain on 13 July.

Join the united protest in London, and organise walkouts, occupations and other protests in colleges, schools and workplaces.



THE THINGS THEY SAY

'We're all gammon'

Former Conservative cabinet minister Lord Baker

'Was that empty seat REALLY for Diana?'

The Daily Mail goes into overdrive in its reporting of the royal wedding

'Dignity'

The Mail's favoured description of black people it likes is applied to Meghan Markle's mother Doria Ragland

'Even I am wondering now whether I should finally tie the knot'

Lord Mandelson is "inspired" by the wedding

'At ease with itself, outward looking and fit for the 21st century'

What the Mail thinks the marriage has done for the royals

'It was the people's wedding as much as Harry and Meghan's'

The Sun

'It was a modern and multi-racial ceremony'

The Sun



Theresa May sneaks out nine new vermin in ermine

USING THE Royal Wedding as one of those days where bad news can be usefully buried, a list of new peers was released.

Theresa May appointed her best mate among nine new Tory peers.

The PM honoured Catherine Meyer alongside the allies and advisers who will each cost around £30,000 a year in expenses and attendance fees.

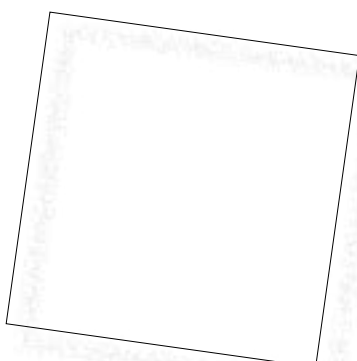
Lady Meyer has previously praised May's "profound humanity" and "courage".

Also ennobled were former Tory MPs Peter Lilley and Sir Eric Pickles.

In 2015 Sir Eric Pickles told The Spectator that he has no interest in going to the House of Lords. "Get a grip on yourself," he told the interviewer. In 2018 Sir Eric is "very pleased" to become Baron Pickles.

Lord Adonis, with no apparent sense of irony, called it "outrageous" that May created new peers.

He did not mind when Tony Blair created 162 Labour peerages, including Lord Adonis.

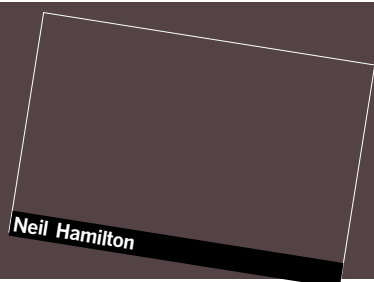


TWO OF Reverend McCrea's many albums

NEIL HAMILTON has said he was told by text that he lost his job as Ukip Welsh assembly group leader.

Caroline Jones said that a majority of the group backed her over Hamilton to lead the group.

But the former Tory MP said he was ambushed. Jones had said the decision was "amicable" but Hamilton said it was a "mystery" to him.



Neil Hamilton

David Cameron handed out 261 peerages, but only 123 were to Tories.

Happily Labour got to pick three peers including former party general secretary Iain McNicol, who is rewarded for services to Corbynism.

Lastly the former DUP MP Dr William McCrea was elevated to the lords.

The gospel singer once shared a platform with loyalist murderer Billy Wright at a rally to show support for the loyalist leader. At a DUP conference McCrea once demanded "Libyan-type strikes" against Dundalk, Drogheda, Crossmaglen and Carrickmore.

He made the call in April 1986, just days after the US government had unleashed air strikes on Libya.

Carrickmore and Crossmaglen are in Northern Ireland.

So McCrea, who is now being elevated to the Lords, wanted "Libyan-type airstrikes" against what he sees as British towns—on the basis that their population was overwhelmingly Catholic.

TENS OF thousands of victims of online fraud are seeing their cases dismissed by a computer algorithm. Unless you are rich. The police guarantee that a human will investigate theft of more than £100,000. More than half of 290,00 cases reported are deemed not worthy of investigation.

Some Tories funded by the Communist Party

SOME Tory MPs have been dredging up Cold War language, warning of the dangers of "communism".

But four Tory MPs have each received at least £2,000-worth of freebies from an actual Communist Party for a "movers and shakers" trip abroad.

According to the latest register of MPs' interests, Tories Bim Afolami, Oliver Letwin, Richard Graham and Victoria Prentis went to the UK-China

Leadership Forum in Beijing last month. They had an added trip to Wuhan, thanks to funding from the International Liaison Department of the Chinese Communist Party.

The forum was also funded by the Great Britain China Centre, with financial support from insurer Prudential and oil firm BP.

The Tory MPs were joined by Labour's Andrew Gwynne and Nia Griffith. The SNP's Stephen Gethin went too.

Comrade Letwin

Bumper bonanza year for billionaires

A RECORD 357 new billionaires emerged last year as the already very wealthy saw their combined fortunes soar to an all-time high of £6.8 trillion.

That is more than three times Britain's gross domestic product.

The number of billionaires worldwide increased by 15 percent to 2,754 in 2017, according to a report by Wealth-X. Their combined wealth increased by 24 percent in a year.

The 10 richest billionaires collectively hold assets worth more than £500 billion.

Jeff Bezos, the founder of Amazon, grabbed

£26 billion more in the past year to take his wealth to £100 billion.

In just one day last month, Bezos's fortune increased by £9 billion, after Amazon reported much higher than expected profits.

The US is home to the largest population of billionaires with 680, a 10 percent increase on 2016.

Sadly Britain lost four billionaires to reduce the total here to a mere 90.

Jeff Bezos

PC Boddie and Taser

Bristol Taser cop not guilty

A POLICE officer was cleared last week of assault after firing a Taser at the face of a race relations adviser from her own force.

PC Claire Boddie, approached Judah Adunbi with PC Darren Weston as he walked his dog.

He refused to give his name, accused the officers of racism. PC Boddie said she did not know if he had a weapon and thought it was reasonable to use the Taser. The magistrate agreed. PC Boddie is now an acting sergeant.



Abuse cops deny sabotage

TWO ESSEX cops pleaded not guilty to sabotaging a string of sex abuse cases.

Detective constables Sharon Patterson and Lee Pollard are each charged with three counts of misconduct in a public office between 2012 and 2014.

Patterson allegedly falsely represented evidence to her supervisor so that no further action would be taken against a suspect in 2012.

She created a false statement from a witness and passed it off as genuine.

Pollard is accused of removing and destroying four photographs which were "relevant and important exhibits".

Pollard allegedly misrepresented evidence to his supervisor for no further action to be taken.

In the investigation involving a 13-year-old complainant, he allegedly failed to conduct relevant inquiries, and reported that they had a "negative result".

They are both accused of creating false CPS charging documents to deceive supervisors into thinking no further action was being taken in cases.

Their trial will be heard next January.

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Anti-racists outnumber FLA thugs in Manchester

by TOMÁŠ TENGELY-EVANS

ANTI-RACISTS outnumbered the Football Lads Alliance (FLA)—by two to one—last Saturday for the first time since the group began mobilising on the streets last summer.

Over 600 joined the rally in Manchester against the racist group, organised by Stand Up To Racism (SUTR) Manchester and Unite Against Fascism. They rallied in St Peter's Square then marched down next to where the FLA had gathered to chants of, "Whose streets? Our streets."

Shazzia from the Labour Party came as part of the SUTR delegation from the West Midlands. She told Socialist Worker that the FLA was in Manchester "to build hatred and division".

"By being here today we've shown that they are not going to divide us," she said. "There is a majority of us and a minority of them."

The anti-racist turnout was built through broad-based support from Labour MPs, councillors and national and local trade unions.

Dawn Taylor, NEU union divisional secretary, had come with a delegation from one of the dozens of trade unionists who supported the demonstration with banners.

Speak

"The FLA does not speak for this city," she told Socialist Worker.

"Manchester is as diverse as it comes. As the chant goes—we're black, white, Asian and we're gay."

In a sharp contrast to the confidence on the anti-racist side, the FLA supporters were dour, demoralised and divided. They turned out at most 300—compared to 20,000 in London last October and 3,000 in Birmingham in March.

The FLA had planned to march



THE NEAR-EMPTY Castlefield Bowl during the FLA protest last Saturday

PICTURES: NEIL TERRY

BACK STORY

The Football Lads Alliance aims to whip up Islamophobia and racism

● It wants to regroup the forces of the far right in Britain and create a racist street movement

● Fascists such as Tommy Robinson have been warmly welcomed at FLA events

● A split from the FLA, the Democratic Football Lads Alliance, is a larger organisation

● Both aim to drive up racism. It's vital to mobilise against the FLA and DFLA on the streets

through the city centre on the anniversary of the Manchester Arena bombing to encourage Islamophobia.

But, as their march wasn't allowed to go ahead, at most 250 rallied in a near-empty Castlefield Bowl. Over 50 remained drinking in the adjacent Castlefield Hotel balcony, noticeably disappointed by their numbers.

FLA supporters in the crowd commented, "This is fucking shit" to one another and blamed the leadership for "poor organisation like in Birmingham".

While smaller than their earlier outings, far right and racist politics ran through the rally much more openly (see below).

The danger of the far right regrouping has not gone away.

The Democratic Football Lads Alliance (DFLA), a larger breakaway group on the up, plans to march in Manchester on 2 June. It was part of a 4,000-strong march and rally called by fascist former EDL leader Tommy Robinson in London earlier this month. The DFLA is acting as bridge between the fascists and Ukip.

Anti-racists will have to mobilise again in large numbers on 2 June.

What's your story?

Email with your ideas
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Rally focuses on 'far left'

THERE WERE a few English Defence League (EDL) members on the FLA protest in Manchester, along with people wearing Donald Trump hats and young Ukip members.

One of the star speakers was Trevor Coult from the Democrats and Veterans Party (DVP).

It is a split from Ukip headed by failed leadership candidate John Rees-Evans, who proposed a repatriation scheme taken from the British National Party.

To loud cheers Coult called to "replace our ministers with seasoned

veterans" and boasted that 16 generals and commissioners supported or joined the DVP. And he called FLA supporters to join them.

A speaker from Justice for Our Boys campaign called for deportation of foreign criminals.

A big focus at the rally was fighting the far left.

The compere said, "We should not bow down to Corbyn and the far left who can't count to five."

Speaker Vinnie Sullivan said that "our goal is to tackle the alt left" and warned against "Anarcho-Communism".



Vinnie Sullivan

Shift from Labour on migration

DIANE ABBOTT last week pledged that a Labour government would end the Tories' "hostile environment" for migrants.

The shadow home secretary's speech on Wednesday marked a sharp break with Labour's past support for racist scapegoating.

Her plans include stopping indefinite detention and shutting down Yarl's Wood and Brook House.

Abbott's announcement came as the HM Inspectorate of Prisons raised "serious concerns" after observing the removal of 23 asylum seekers from two immigration removal centres by guards working for a private firm.

Abbott said, "Labour will end this rotten system—private firms have no business in detention."

Hinted

Abbott hinted that Labour would scrap the Immigration Act 2014. "The next Labour government will repeal all those parts of the immigration legislation that were introduced to support it," she said.

"We will rescind all Home Office instructions to carry it out and we will remove all obligations on landlords, employers and others".

Abbott's speech is a big step forward—and anti-racists should use it to push further. A Labour government should shut down all 13 immigration prisons in Britain.

It should halt all deportations, give all asylum seekers indefinite leave to remain and defend freedom of movement. To achieve that means building a mass movement against racism.

IN THIS WEEK

1966

Seafarers' strike sparks emergency

A LABOUR government declared a state of emergency on 23 May 1966, a week into a national seafarers' strike.

Prime minister Harold Wilson said strikers were "endangering the economic welfare of the nation".

Breakfast in



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For updates and analysis on the stories that matter go to socialistworker.co.uk/breakfastinred



Will inquiry give truth and justice to survivors of Grenfell?

by ALISTAIR FARROW

SURVIVORS, BEREAVED relatives and justice campaigners vowed to keep up the fight as the public inquiry into the Grenfell Tower fire opened on Monday.

The inquiry begins with two weeks of commemorations for the dead.

Mohamed Amied Neda lived on the top floor of Grenfell Tower. He died after apparently falling to his death.

It's been "almost a year and there are so many unanswered questions," said his brother Mohamed Aref Neda.

The testimonies were harrowing, reminding everyone of the torment caused by the neglect and contempt that led to the fire.

They come after survivors and the bereaved forced Theresa May to announce that two "experts" would be brought in as advisers to inquiry chair Sir Martin Moore-Bick.

While this isn't the full panel inquiry that survivors demanded, it's a small victory that shows more can be won.

Bowed

Deborah Coles from the Inquest legal charity and campaign group spoke to Socialist Worker about the problems with the panel and inquiry. "They have bowed to political pressure," she said. "It's not a panel, but in a way it's a climbdown."

"I give it a very cautious welcome until we know who that panel are."

The two appointed experts are going to sit alongside Moore-Bick during the second stage of the inquiry. This will look at some of the wider issues around the fire, such as the council's failings and parts of the regulatory framework.

"The panel need to be around from the beginning," said Coles. "Especially in the next couple of weeks when we're going to hear testimony from families about who they're mourning as a result of this shocking injustice."

If the inquiry is to deliver anything near to justice, the Tories

BACK STORY

The Tories continue to treat the Grenfell survivors and bereaved relatives with contempt

● But the government is vulnerable to even small amounts of pressure

● Theresa May announced that two experts would join the public inquiry that opened on Monday

● And housing minister James Brokenshire had to retreat over banning flammable cladding

● It will take massive pressure to get justice from the inquiry

and Moore-Bick will have to be put under irresistible pressure.

Coles said, "History has taught us that unless you get inquiries' recommendations enacted then things don't change."

"With inquiries and inquests it's about ensuring that recommendations are acted upon."

"And there's a duty to report on what action is being carried out and that is regularly monitored and audited."

"Had recommendations from inquiries into previous fires been acted on we wouldn't be having this conversation," she added, referring to the Lakeland House fire in 2009.

Key recommendations to retrofit tower blocks with sprinklers were not implemented after an inquiry published its findings in 2013. May's current adviser Gavin Barwell was the housing minister who sat on that report.

Coles was also scathing about the specific problems with how the Grenfell Tower inquiry has been set up. "We can never again have a situation where you set up an inquiry into an injustice in the way that this has been set up," she said.

And she said that Inquest would work to make sure future governments would set up inquiries "with proper thought as to its role and also in terms of its diversity".

The pressure can't let up—the Silent Walks and protests must continue alongside the inquiry.



AROUND 1,000 people marched for justice on the Silent Walk for Grenfell last week

PICTURE: GUY SMALLMAN

Outrage after the Hackitt review fails to ban flammable cladding

AS THE inquiry got underway, shocking new revelations about the flammable ladding used on Grenfell Tower emerged.

Celotex, the firm which manufactured the cladding, used extra fire retardant material on the cladding sample sent for testing. That meant the cladding sold for public use was more flammable.

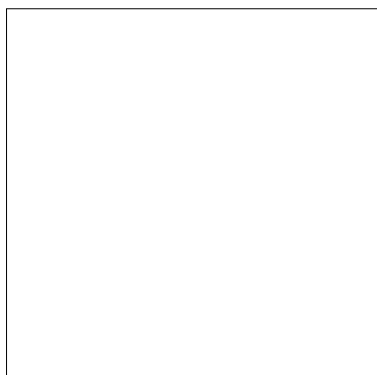
It came barely a week after the Hackitt review into building regulations and fire safety failed to recommend an outright ban on flammable cladding.

Shahin Sadafi from Grenfell United survivors' group said, "When we met Dame Hackitt we asked her for an outright ban on combustible cladding."

"We are disappointed that she didn't listen to us and she didn't listen to other experts."

In response Tory housing minister James Brokenshire announced a consultation into banning similar materials to those used on Grenfell Tower.

The news last Thursday came after Theresa May announced



Flammable cladding is removed from Ferrier Point in Canning Town last month

the Tories would set aside £400 million to strip tower blocks with similar cladding.

That's unlikely to be enough—151 blocks still require work and the cost of removing cladding from just 10 blocks in Camden, north London, came to £50 million.

The review also "does not ban assessments in lieu of tests"—the now-infamous "desktop studies". "Desktop study" safety tests of

building materials are based on the results of previous tests on similar products.

These tests were revealed to be faulty by the Fire Protection Association last month.

The report claims it doesn't recommend banning desktop studies because some products are too large to be tested in the Building Research Establishment's facilities.

It's possible that Hackitt pitched the report for what she thought the Tories would agree to. She said the regulatory system is "a broken system and banning cladding on its own is not going to fix it".

Yet she offered no explanation of why fixing the system couldn't include banning flammable cladding. Other recommendations say residents should be consulted over safety decisions.

Some of the report's recommendations would be welcome changes, but whether the Tories implement even those remains to be seen.

Rulers want to restore people's faith in the state

SOME OF the strongest mainstream critics of the Tories over Grenfell have insisted the inquiry must gain the trust of survivors.

At a meeting in parliament last Monday Labour MP David Lammy said, "Of course there is deep mistrust of authority within the community."

"Of course they have no faith in the state and the establishment."

"It is the state that has failed, so it is the state that has to work hard to regain the trust of the Grenfell families."

And he asked, "Why does trust matter?" He

had already given the answer—the inquiry's job is to make sure people continue to trust the state.

The inquiry is intended to prevent the guilty at the top of the state being held accountable.

That doesn't mean they're beyond challenge.

In the weeks after the fire Tory-run Kensington and Chelsea lead councillor for housing Rock Feilding-Mellen and leader Nicholas Paget-Brown were forced to stand down.

It shows we can wring concessions from the Tories with a militant campaign that demands justice

for the victims. But both were re-elected as councillors in last month's local elections.

It's an example why the justice campaigns need to relentlessly keep up pressure.

Survivors, the bereaved and activists should not trust the state, contrary to Lammy and other MP's protestations.

The state failed the people who died in the Grenfell Tower fire.

It isn't neutral, but a tool for one class to rule over the other.

A deep mistrust of the capitalist state that allowed Grenfell to happen is a good start in the fight to win justice.

Tory council leader Nicholas Paget-Brown (left) was forced to step down after the fire

Socialist Worker
WHAT WE THINK

LIVINGSTONE'S EXIT WILL FEED RIGHT'S DEMANDS

KEN Livingstone's decision to resign from the Labour Party on Monday is a victory for those who have been harring the party over allegations of antisemitism.

It is also another sign of the failure by the party leadership to stand up to the pressure.

The Tories, much of the media, the Labour right and the Board of Deputies of British Jews have repeatedly demanded Livingstone's removal.

Now they have their wish—and it will feed further demands.

The Labour right queued up to post their happiness. "Good. But he should have been expelled," said Mike Gapes MP.

But it wasn't just the right. Owen Jones tweeted, "Glad that Ken Livingstone has left the Labour Party. Now Labour has to keep desperately working on mending its relationship with Britain's Jews."

Former MP and London mayor Livingstone said he resigned because "the ongoing issues around my suspension have become a distraction from the key political issue of our time".

Two years ago Livingstone's

remarks that "Hitler was supporting Zionism" before the Holocaust played into the right's hands.

Right wingers were desperate to equate criticism of Israel with antisemitism—and they grabbed their chance.

He was suspended from Labour. Livingstone's remarks were poorly-phrased, but he is not racist or antisemitic.

He has a strong anti-racist record. Livingstone used his position as mayor to support anti-racist causes at a time when they were far less widely officially accepted than they are now.

In April 2017 Labour's disciplinary panel found

“The right was desperate to equate criticism of Israel with antisemitism

Livingstone guilty of bringing the party into disrepute and suspended him again. That was not nearly enough for many Labour figures.

Over 100 Labour MPs signed an open letter calling on the party to throw Livingstone out.

In March this year the suspension was extended. As false allegations of antisemitism multiplied recently, it was obvious that only firm backing from Corbyn and his allies could save Livingstone.

There was no such support.

A new Labour Party disciplinary process was due to begin this week, and it's probable Livingstone was told he was for the chop.

Anti-racist Marc Wadsworth was expelled last month without a word of complaint from the top of the party.

On Monday Corbyn said, "Ken Livingstone's resignation is sad after such a long and vital contribution to London and progressive politics, but was the right thing to do."

If Labour's leaders crumble under this sort of pressure, how are they going to stand up to the much more intense pressures they will face if they reach government?

GET OUT OF AFGHANISTAN

AT LEAST 400 extra British troops could soon be sent to Afghanistan.

Tory defence secretary Gavin Williamson wants them to join the 600 already stationed in the capital Kabul.

The move comes after US president Donald Trump called on Nato members to back his surge in US troops.

It looks like Britain will dutifully oblige to shore up the "special relationship".

It's 17 years since British troops

were sent to Afghanistan. It's more than a decade since Labour defence secretary John Reid said British forces "would be perfectly happy to leave in three years time without firing one shot".

In fact the war has ground on remorselessly with tens of thousands of Afghan civilians dead.

We will never know exactly how many were killed because the aggressors—the US, Britain and their allies—refused to count.

And a reputable study in 2013 said the war in Afghanistan had

cost Britain £37 billion. All the blood and money has just brought more horrors.

And some generals want even more aggression than is proposed now.

Former British commander in Afghanistan, General Sir Richard Barrons, has said Britain should deploy around 10 percent of the troops sent by the US. That would mean a force of 1,200.

Far from sending more troops, the US and Britain should get out of Afghanistan now.

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ANALYSIS

ALEX CALLINICOS



Regional rivalries lie behind Trump shifts

WHY IS Donald Trump destabilising the Middle East? For that's what he's doing by moving the US embassy in Israel to Jerusalem and withdrawing from the nuclear deal with Iran.

The mainstream ruling class explanation is summed up by the title of an article by Edward Luce in the Financial Times newspaper—"Donald Trump is playing with matches in the Middle East." In other words, Trump is motivated by little more than vanity and stupidity.

I'm sure there is some truth to this, but it doesn't get to the heart of the problem. The best place to start is by asking who won the Iraq war. We know who lost—the US and Britain. But who won? Certainly not the Iraqi people, whose misery has continued more or less unbroken.

The answer is Iran. The US-British invasion of Iraq removed the Islamic Republic's most dangerous opponent, Saddam Hussein, who had waged a bloody eight-year war against it in the 1980s.

Moreover, Hussein's regime represented the domination of a Sunni Muslim minority over the Shiite majority in Iraq. His fall allowed this oppressed majority to assert itself politically. The Iranian regime, which bases itself on Shia Islam, has exercised a major influence over successive Iraqi governments for more than a decade.

It was also able to exploit the partial disintegration of the two main states of the Arab East—Iraq and Syria.

Iran's Revolutionary Guards and its close ally, the Lebanese Shiite movement Hizbollah, have played a crucial role in propping up the regime of Bashar al-Assad in Syria. Iranian-backed Shiite militias were heavily involved in the defeat of Isis in Iraq.

The wars in Syria and Iraq have thus left the Iranian regime sitting pretty. Moreover, Hizbollah came top in the recent Lebanese elections. These developments are anathema to two other Middle Eastern regimes—Israel, which fears a strong and hostile Iran, and Saudi Arabia, whose ruling dynasty draws its legitimacy from a purist version of Sunni Islam.

Conciliate

The US response to these developments was, from the latter days of George W Bush's second administration, to conciliate Iran. The nuclear deal that Barack Obama—supported by five other "world powers"—struck in 2015 was a continuation of this policy. But the Saudis and Israelis opposed the deal. Their most powerful argument is not that Iran has violated the agreement—there is no evidence that it has—but that it is growing stronger.

In Trump they have found a US president who is willing to listen to them. But what is their alternative? War? The Pentagon blocked the Bush administration's plans to attack Iran in the mid-2000s and there's not the slightest evidence that Trump would stomach another Middle East war. He might back an Israeli-Saudi alliance against Iran—a bizarre coalition of the Zionist state and the antisemitic Salafis in Riyadh.

But Iran isn't an easy nut to crack. It took US naval and air power to tip the balance in Saddam Hussain's favour in 1987-8. And Tehran's regional alliances mean that it really could bring "fire and fury" to the Middle East. So Trump is concentrating on economic sanctions—and in particular using the threat of losing access to the US market and financial system to discipline Europe and Japan.

But the Middle East remains an unpredictable place. An alliance led by Moqtada al-Sadr has just come top in the Iraqi elections. Sadr was one of the most prominent opponents of the occupation of Iraq. He led a movement of the Shia poor centred on Sadr City (named after his family) in Baghdad that at its height in 2004 threatened to become part of a general national rising against the US and Britain.

Tragically the occupiers and the predecessors of Isis between them split the resistance along sectarian lines.

The Sadrist armed wing, the Mehdi army, were involved in death squads killing Sunnis, though it was never clear whether Sadr sanctioned this. In any case, now he's back, leading a coalition that involves secularists and leftists and opposing Iraq's subordination to either the US or Iran.

This underlines that the Arab world isn't just the plaything of its corrupt rulers and outside powers.

Bosses' care home selloffs cause crisis for older people

One of Britain's biggest providers of care homes is up for sale—exposing the problems with privatisation, says Sarah Bates

THOUSANDS OF older people have been left with an uncertain future following news that Britain's biggest care homes firm is up for sale.

HC-One bosses hope to pocket £1 billion from selling their 369 residential and nursing care homes.

The news leaves residents and families terrified about their care—and 14,000 workers fearing for their jobs.

If investors close companies, they can withdraw care. This was the case with Bield homes, which closed most of its 12 care homes earlier this year (see below).

The HC-One selloff is the latest example of a fragmented and highly competitive social care sector.

Just last week care home company Four Seasons announced it was being taken over, after fat cats lost £450 million on their investment.

Collapsed

HC-One was founded in 2011 and took over hundreds of care homes from Southern Cross when it collapsed.

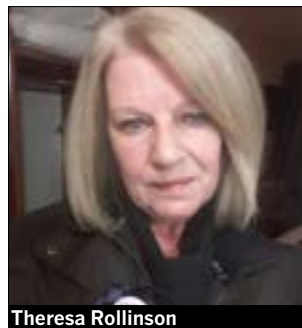
Care UK is another healthcare giant that is selling off its residential arm. It has 118 care homes with almost 8,000 beds.

Theresa Rollinson worked for Care UK before it sold some of its supported living



CARE UK workers on strike in 2014—now the firm is making more selloffs

PICTURE: GUY SMALLMAN



Theresa Rollinson

services for people with learning disabilities.

Now the service is operated by Living Ambition. Theresa said selloffs left workers in "constant worry about how the changes to terms and conditions will affect us".

And the news about HC-One comes just days after Allied Healthcare, which also owns care homes, agreed a repayment plan. Allied bosses

had warned of imminent collapse in April.

Bosses at Allied and HC-One have both in part blamed a HMRC ruling made last November for the cuts.

This said that workers on a sleep-in shift should receive the minimum wage for all their time spent at work.

Previously to this, staff would only get a flat rate for the shift.

Bosses are worried because workers can claim up to six years of backdated sleep-in pay.

But Theresa says that the sleep-in changes only affect those on the lowest pay rate, and her average hourly wage hasn't gone up.

There are also widespread cuts to local authority

funding, and greater pressure for people to self-fund their stays in care homes.

But with an ageing population, these care homes are needed now more than ever.

The number of care homes has fallen by more than 700 in the last two years, and 148 care home businesses fell into insolvency in 2017.

Theresa said that councils are selling off care homes, but ultimately "services should be in house".

"They're all looking for bailouts," she said. "But private companies shouldn't be doing this in the first place."

Got a story?
Email ideas to reports@socialistworker.co.uk

'She's lost two stone' after closure

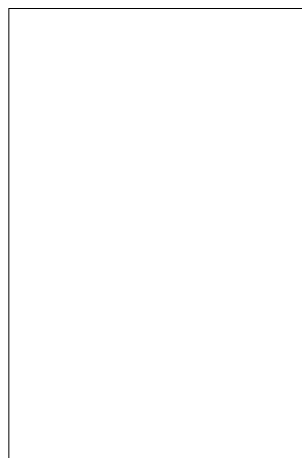
LAURA OWENS set up the campaign to save Bield care homes in Scotland when they were threatened with closure.

The closures went ahead and Laura's grandmother has suffered hugely as result.

"She has deteriorated to the extent we were told she would start to receive end of life care", Laura told Socialist Worker.

"She's lost two stone in weight, she doesn't eat and she's no longer able to hold a conversation."

Laura added, "The Scottish government have



Glossy publicity from Bield does not match the reality of closures

washed their hands of the whole thing.

"My MSP Michael Matheson told me, 'Laura, we don't have a bottomless pit of money.' But they find money for other things."

The impact has been massive.

"Some families have ended up taking their relatives home again, and it's mostly women looking after them now," Laura said.

Laura is part of Social Work Action Network, which is fighting for the renationalisation of adult social care across Britain.

FIGURE IT OUT

700

The number of care homes in Britain has fallen by over 700 in the last two years

148

The number of care home businesses that fell into insolvency last year

369

The number of care homes run by HC-One, which is selling them off

Trump will be hounded on his July British visit

With only 50 days to go until the bigot-in-chief arrives, we must plan protests, writes Alistair Farrow

THE COUNTDOWN to US president Donald Trump's visit to Britain has begun. He is due to arrive on Friday 13 July—around 50 days away—and must be met with mass protests.

Tory prime minister Theresa May extended the invitation. That's despite Trump's boasts of sexual assault, repeated racist remarks, vocal support for Israeli hardliners, anti-abortion bigots and much other disgusting behaviour.

And presumably she won't care that last week he referred to undocumented migrants as "animals".

The outburst came at a meeting with California sheriffs to discuss the state's "sanctuary state" immigration policy.

"You wouldn't believe how bad these people are," Trump said. "These aren't people, these are animals, and we're taking them out of the country at a level and at a rate that's never happened before."

He later claimed he had been talking about a gang called MS-13.

Trump has previously referenced the gang in racist attempts to smear migrants from Latin America.

The Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agency website is full of examples of the agency targeting gang members.

Sharp

What it doesn't advertise so freely is the sharp increase in immigration audits of firms to check they are not employing undocumented migrants.

The checks have increased by 60 percent. Between 1 October 2017 and 1 May 2018, 3,510 investigations were opened.

In January ICE launched a series of checks on 100 franchises of the 7-Eleven grocery chain.

By the end of September the Homeland Security Investigations division of ICE expects to have carried out some 5,500 checks.

That's triple the number for the same period last year—and is the result of the racism pushed by Trump. Every time he calls

**TOGETHER
AGAINST
TRUMP
NATIONAL
DEMONSTRATION**

**Friday 13 July,
2pm, London**

Mexicans "rapists", or claims that Haitians coming to the US "all have Aids", it legitimises the policies that kick people out.

Trump enjoys support from the far right in the US.

And racists around the world recognise that having one of their own in the White House strengthens the right everywhere.

It won't come as much of a surprise that the infamous Israeli football team Beitar Jerusalem has decided to name itself after Trump.

The move came after Trump announced the US recognised Jerusalem as the Israeli capital and moved the US embassy there.

Beitar Jerusalem has never signed an Arab player. After signing non-Arab Muslim players club offices have been torched and the players have faced a torrent of abuse from the team's own fans.

In a statement the club said, "President Trump has shown courage and true love of the Israeli people and their capital."

Hundreds of thousands on the street against Trump's visit in towns across Britain will weaken the racists.



On other pages...

How can Palestine be free?
>>Pages 14&15



AROUND 1,000 joined the Palestine solidarity demonstration for Gaza in London last Tuesday. Protests took place in towns and cities across Britain

PICTURE: GUY SMALLMAN

GAMBLING

Crackdown on bosses that bet on misery?

by SARAH BATES

GAMBLING BOSSES are furious at new restrictions aimed at tackling the "crack cocaine" of gambling machines.

The government says it is going to slash the maximum stake from £100 to £2 on roulette machines in betting shops.

The fixed-odds betting terminals (FOBTs) are hugely profitable for the bosses and make them £1.8 billion every year.

The FOBTs allow money to be put in every 20 seconds, and are a favourite with people who have gambling problems.

Gambling companies have been fighting for years to keep the stake as high as possible and now the industry is threatening job losses and shop closures.

They lure people in with the promise of quick cash—but inevitably overall people lose out. In 2016 a quarter of a million people lost more than £1,000 in one sitting at a FOBT.

Scam—fixed-odds betting terminals

The government is giving the gambling companies plenty of time to pile up cash and devise new ways to make money.

The vote on new regulations is not expected until 2019, and there could be a gap before implementation after that.

It is rank hypocrisy for the

Tory government to pretend to care about the welfare of ordinary people.

It is Tory austerity and attacks on jobs, health care and housing that contribute to the desperation that fuels the gambling industry's enormous profits.

France—fury on streets as strikers are united

A wave of revolt has swept France with unions, students and the left uniting, reports **Charlie Kimber**

HUNDREDS OF thousands of workers struck and demonstrated on Tuesday in the latest round of their battle against French president Emmanuel Macron's neoliberal reforms.

Around 130 demonstrations and rallies took place across France. The coordinated public sector strike was called by nine union federations.

Those striking included civil service workers, teachers, lecturers, some hospital and social care workers, weather forecasters, postal workers, some lorry drivers, electricity workers and air traffic controllers.

The government increased workers' anger this week by confirming that it wants to slash 120,000 public sector jobs by 2022.

Most rail workers, who have struck two days out of five since 4 April, were not due to start the latest round of their strikes until Tuesday night. But those in the Sud-Rail union walked out earlier to join the demonstrations.

Some schools were blockaded from early morning. And a large number of university students also took to the streets against a new selection process.

Convergence

Health worker Juliette Fiat told Socialist Worker, "Some of us are on strike at our hospital.

"We all want to be out together—for the rail workers, for everyone. There needs to be a general strike, a convergence of the different struggles."

Hundreds of thousands of workers were also set to take part in a "popular wave" of anti-Macron demonstrations on Saturday.

Jean-Luc Melenchon's left wing France Insoumise party is one of the day's organisers. "For the first time campaigning, union and political organisations are coming together to call a united day of mobilisation," it said.

There is a broad welcome for coordination and cooperation on the streets, but it has to be followed

BACK STORY

President Emmanuel Macron is trying to push through a package of free market reforms

● He wants to break the rail workers, who are seen as the best organised section of the French working class

● Other groups of public sector workers have joined the rail workers' strikes too

● University and school students, parents and the left are part of it

● But the union leaders have been hesitating

by united and harder-hitting struggle by workers. One sign of the potential for a more extended movement came this week when parents, teachers and students occupied the Lycee Voltaire school in Paris.

Parent Muriel told Socialist Worker, "Macron wants changes throughout education. It will be harder to go to university and in schools teachers are supposed to rank children on things such as 'commitment' and 'initiative'."

"There are also big cuts to counsellors."

The government is trying to divide its opponents.

The interior minister denounced Unef student union representative Maryam Pougetoux for wearing a headscarf when she gave a televised interview. He said her appearance was "shocking" and many others joined in.

Disgracefully Melenchon also attacked Pougetoux and said it was like him turning up at an interview with a giant cross.

But many students rallied round Pougetoux. Unef said she had been attacked "because she is a woman, a Muslim, wearing the veil, but also a student with a union position".



On other pages...

"Why are we worth less?" ask Tesco strikers >>>Page 17



STUDENTS HOLD placards including one reading, 'Macron resign, no to selection'

PICTURE: GUY SMALLMAN

CATALONIA

Spain faces fresh crisis over Catalonia

A NEW political crisis was looming this week for Spanish Tory prime minister Mariano Rajoy over Catalonia and a crucial budget vote.

If he survives, it will be because of the Labour-type Socialist Party.

The Spanish state imposed direct rule in Catalonia seven months ago after its people voted overwhelmingly for independence.

After Catalan parliamentary elections returned a majority in favour of independence, Rajoy used legal manoeuvres to block a series of candidates from becoming

Mariano Rajoy

Catalan president.

The parliament at last elected a president—Quim Torra who is on the right wing of the independence movement.

The anti-capitalist CUP party

said it would go into opposition against Torra's government.

Torra's cabinet includes Catalan MPs who are imprisoned or in exile, and Rajoy has responded by saying that direct rule over Catalonia will be maintained.

Disgracefully the Socialist Party has backed him.

But in a budget vote that was set for Thursday of this week, Rajoy needed the support of the PNV Basque nationalist party.

It said it would not back him unless he ditches direct rule.

Full background at bit.ly/Marx21Catalonia

VENEZUELA

President Nicolas Maduro wins re-election

VENEZUELA'S left wing president Nicolas Maduro was re-elected with 67.7 percent of the vote on Sunday.

Turnout was low at 46 percent.

The election comes amid a deepening crisis of Venezuelan capitalism, which has seen severe food shortages.

And the news comes after US president

Nicolas Maduro

Donald Trump said recently he would support a coup to remove Maduro from power.

Allegations of fraud and coercion dogged the election.

These include claims that recipients of welfare were told their payments were conditional on their voting for Maduro.

The right has decades

of coup attempts to its name.

And there is well documented evidence of vote suppression in the US.

Right wingers in Venezuela are looking for any opportunity to get rid of Maduro.

And they have refused to acknowledge the results of Sunday's election.

Movement in Spain is inspiration

SINCE THE Huelga Feminista (feminist strike) on 8 March, the Spanish women's movement has burst onto the streets.

The demands of the movement for an end to domestic violence, gender inequality and the pay gap have clearly struck a chord.

In recent weeks the anger people feel has been fed by the judgement in La Manada. This is a court case where a group of five men were accused of raping an 18 year old woman during the "bull running" festival in Pamplona.

They even stole the woman's phone and recorded the events. Yet the judgement has been one of "sexual abuse" rather than rape.

Once more, people took to the streets to demand changes to the judicial system in Spain.

This comes as big political questions are being asked about freedom of speech, Catalan independence and political interference in the media and other institutions.

There have also been demonstrations in defence of state pensions.

It has been an inspiration to be part of this movement. Already small reforms are being won and right wing, neoliberal politicians are lining up to claim they are feminists.

But we need to make sure that the movement achieves much more than superficial reforms.

Karen Mee
Oviedo, Asturias, Spain

Troops don't bring peace

IT LOOKS like the British government could send more troops to Afghanistan.

This is because Donald Trump wants help to deal with a "resurgence" by the Taliban.

In 2001 we were told that Western intervention would bring peace to Afghanistan.

In fact, bombs and occupation have just led to more anger and instability—and ordinary people are the ones who suffer.

Sonia Little
Maltby



ILLUSTRATION: TIM SANDERS

We have to act now to stop state murder of Palestinians

AS I watched events in Gaza unfold on the news, I was astounded by utterly obscene contrasting pictures.

On the one hand, the US and Israel celebrated the opening of the US embassy in Jerusalem. Israeli president Binyamin Netanyahu claimed it was a "glorious day".

On the other hand unarmed Palestinians were slaughtered like cattle by the Israeli army.

It was a non-violent protest met with the most brutal, violent reaction.

Declaring that Jerusalem is the capital of Israel was a deliberate and provocative move by the US.

Moving its embassy to Jerusalem was also intended to incite a reaction from Palestinians.

Jerusalem is the capital of Palestine. Furthermore Jerusalem is in occupied territory—opening the US embassy in Jerusalem is a crime under international law.

What we are witnessing today is brutal ethnic cleansing of Palestinians. Future generations will judge us for our response.

The Nakba did not end in 1948. It continues today in the ongoing persecution of Palestinians and theft of their lands.

The foreign leaders who stand by and silently allow this catastrophe to continue have blood on their hands. Now is the time to act.

Call upon the British government to fulfil its legal obligations as a third state actor to uphold international law.

Support the United Nations' call



A protester in London last Tuesday

PICTURE: GUY SMALLMAN

for an independent investigation into the use of lethal force by Israel.

Take immediate action to end the siege of Gaza. And ensure that British arms, finance and trade are not used to support Israel's atrocities.

Pauline Wheat-Bowen
Huddersfield Palestine Solidarity Campaign

■ IT IS time that the media stopped referring to Israel's occupation of Palestine as a "conflict" or a "war".

This gives the impression that there is some kind of equality between Israel and Palestine.

But it cannot even be said that it is a dispute between two states as only one is officially recognised.

Palestinian land was taken 70 years ago when the state of Israel was created.

Ethnic cleansing, massacres, daily harassment and exile have characterised the lives of those

who have lived in the West Bank and Gaza ever since. War in modern terms suggests that the protagonists have an army, an arsenal of weapons, transport, tanks, aircraft, a navy and a system of command and control.

Israel possesses all of these.

Palestinians have stones, knives and obsolete rockets, most of which are intercepted by a state of the art defence system.

I stayed in a kibbutz close to Gaza with peace activists in November 2012.

It was during another sustained bombing of Gaza from air, sea and land.

An occasional rocket from Gaza exploded near the kibbutz during my three days there.

While frightening it could not compare with the mighty weaponry of one of the top five most well-equipped armies worldwide.

This is not a conflict, nor is it a war. It is the latest in a series of massacres of Palestinians.

It is time for the state of Israel to be held to account for its crimes at the International Criminal Court.

It must be forced to end the occupation of Palestine and the 11-year siege of Gaza—an act of collective punishment in breach of international law.

A good start would be to afford Israel pariah status in the manner of apartheid South Africa, which included an economic and cultural boycott.

Dave Clinch
Torrington

Just a thought...

TUC protest was too small

THE demonstration two weeks ago showed the incompetence of the TUC (Socialist Worker online, 12 May).

Too little time was spent preparing for what should have been a massive mobilisation.

Anthony Dooley
On Twitter

How to argue on migration

I ALWAYS argue two points on migration.

Rich people can move and live pretty much anywhere. So restrictions are a class issue.

And if you believe in "fair" restrictions, where do you draw the line on who can stay?

Merlin Reader
Central London

Private Eye is anti-Corbyn

I HAD to protest at the Private Eye's creeping anti-Corbynism.

A crossword clue was, "Narrow minded feature of Corbyn's party intimates, hopeless, drained of energy around the House". The answer was "antisemitism".

Jim Hutchinson
Newcastle

Don't get rich from racists

A NATIONAL petition is calling on Visa, Mastercard and American Express to stop processing donations for fascist group Britain First.

They are getting rich off Islamophobic groups.

John Appleyard
West Yorkshire

Hypocrisy on Israel killings

ISRAEL'S ATTACKS are horrific, criminal and inhumane.

Where are all the MPs that demanded action so quickly against Russia and Syria with no proof?

Pauline Smith
On Twitter

BBC is biased over Palestine

WHY DOES the BBC give Mark Regev such an easy questioning about Israel's soldiers murdering Palestinians?

Israel is a racist state.
George Arthur
On Twitter

GETTING THE BIGOTS ON THE BACK FOOT IN IRELAND

A battle for women's rights is raging in Ireland as voters get ready for a referendum on the 8th Amendment. **Sarah Bates** reports from Dublin on how the lack of abortion rights there has affected people—and how the fight to change the law can transform Ireland

SINEAD IS one of tens of thousands of women who have been forced to leave Ireland to access abortion services.

"I've no regrets about my abortion and the choice I made," she said. "The biggest factor was the secrecy—it made me feel I'd done something wrong. Society makes it a secret."

Eimear remembers arriving in England from Ireland for an abortion in 1993. She starts crying when she remembers having to find a working public phone to call her mother and keep up the pretence of her "great time in London".

"I don't regret it," she said. "I regret the secrecy around it. We have to be trusted to know that we don't want to be a mother at that time."

Eimear and Sinead spoke publicly about their abortions for the first time just days ahead of a referendum on limited decriminalisation of abortion in Ireland.

The vote on 25 May could strike a decisive blow against anti-abortionists.

Ireland is being asked whether to "repeal the 8th Amendment to the constitution" (see box).

Added in 1983 the 8th sets the rights of a pregnant woman on an equal footing with the rights of a foetus.

The referendum has led to a huge grassroots movement fighting for a strong Yes vote to smash the 8th Amendment.

Thousands are being drawn into political activity—often for the first time—organising meetings, arguing



Eimear and Sinead have spoken out about the reality of abortion rights in Ireland

with voters and knocking on doors.

Eimear and Sinead said the experience of campaigning has helped break down the stigma of talking about their own abortions.

"I've told more people in the last 24 hours than I ever have done before," said Eimear.

Ireland's rulers have come under increasing pressure to change the law in recent years.

The reaction to the death of Savita Halappanavar in 2012 prompted minor changes to the law.

Savita died because of complications from a septic miscarriage when she was 17 weeks pregnant.

The 8th Amendment meant doctors refused

to perform an abortion because the foetus had a heartbeat. Her death brought a fresh wave of anger over how the Irish state controls women's bodies.

The Protection of Life bill 2013 allows for abortion in extremely limited circumstances—if the life of the woman is judged to be at acute risk.

It's been used only a handful of times in five years. Meanwhile there's still a 14-year sentence for any woman or medical practitioner who seeks to procure an abortion in Ireland.

The 8th does not stop Irish women having abortions—it just stops legal, safe and accessible abortions.

An estimated 3,000 women travel abroad to

have an abortion every year, often to London and Liverpool.

The cost stops many more women travelling. And not everyone has the necessary immigration papers or the ability to get time off work.

SINEAD, WHO was 16 when she had her abortion, remembered that "the money had to be found".

"In 1993 it was £1,000 to £1,500—there wasn't that money lying around easily," she said. "My main feeling was relief but I felt guilt that I'd put the burden on my parents, who had five other children to take care of."

The Women Help Women organisation estimated that every day at least two people, unable to travel, use abortion pills. They do this without medical attention, often too scared to tell anyone for fear of criminalisation.

And the 8th affects every pregnant

woman. Women can be denied life-saving medical treatment if there's a possibility of harming the foetus.

Brid Smith, People Before Profit TD, locates the strength of the fight for repeal in the grassroots movement.

"The best thing about the campaign has been feet on the streets, and the activism that has opened up" she told Socialist Worker.

"If it was just the Together For Yes campaign (see right) without this movement it would be meaningless."

Brid stressed that the stakes are high. "This isn't just about abortion," she said. "This is about the future of the political shape of Ireland."

The anti-choice bigots, headed by umbrella organisation Love Both, have filled the streets with posters that equate abortion with killing "pre-born babies".

Maria founded the group Angels



Marching for abortion rights last September

PICTURE: PAULA GERAGHTY

What are they repealing?

THE 8TH Amendment was added to the Irish Constitution in 1983, and was partly a reaction to the 1967 Abortion Act in Britain.

It reads "The state acknowledges the right to life of the unborn and, with due regard to the equal right to life of the

mother, guarantees in its laws, and, as far as practicable, by its laws to defend and vindicate that right."

Abortion was already illegal in Ireland. But this was an attempt to make it harder to relax the rules.



What about Northern Ireland?

THE BRITISH Abortion Act 1967 has never been fully applied to Northern Ireland.

Yet women there should receive the same NHS treatments as they do in Britain.

Women in Northern Ireland are supposed to be able to have

abortions. But it is so difficult to access that many travel to England to terminate or take pills at home.

It's illegal to access these pills, and three women have been prosecuted by the police in recent years.



Evebelle campaigning for Yes

4 Yes that blocks these distressing images using large theatrical wings.

She experienced two miscarriages and said, "Images like this have no place in the campaign."

Younger votes are most likely to support Yes, while those over 50 are the ones most determined to retain it. Evebelle is a student at Dublin Trinity campaigning for Yes. She says there is "huge support" for Yes at the university.

"We got 1,000 Trinity students registered to vote in one day," she said. "Young people are really mobilised by this."

"It's been an amazing experience. I'm very much a feminist, and after the referendum I'm not going to run of issues to fight about."

Canvassing for support has become the central focus for the campaign, with canvasses organised each night. And it's popular—mass canvassing can attract over

a hundred people at weekends.

When Together for Yes activists knocked on Paul's door in Walkinstown, a suburb of south Dublin, he was happy to show his support.

"I'm definitely voting Yes," he said. "It should be a choice between a woman and her doctor, and the medical care should happen in Ireland."

And he touched on the hypocrisy of the anti-choice bigots who pretend to care about the wellbeing of children.

"I've got a disabled daughter, where's the care for her?" he asked. "They're cutting her respite care."

THE REFERENDUM takes place under the shadow of decades of scandals about the Catholic Church.

Exposures of the abuse at the heart of homes for unmarried mothers and their children by



Brid Smith People Before Profit TD meets Paul on the campaign trail

Some are trying to hold back the pace of change

TOGETHER FOR Yes is an umbrella organisation of the Coalition for the Repeal of the Eighth Amendment, Abortion Rights Campaign and National Women's Council of Ireland.

It also contains members of the Dail—the Irish parliament—and sections of the Irish state that have blocked reproductive rights.

"They have no track record on abortion," said Brid. "I proposed a bill about a year and a half ago in the Dail to reduce the sentence from 14 years to a fine of one euro."

"They voted it down." Those who have spent decades obstructing social progress have not suddenly had a change of heart.

Instead they are responding to the changing political mood.

The upcoming vote comes shortly after an overwhelming victory for same sex marriage in the 2015 referendum.

Some politicians of the ruling parties see the current referendum as a way to rehabilitate themselves.

Austerity measures, imposed by successive governments have hit Ireland hard over the last decade.

And those in the state who have tried to restrict abortion rights in the past now seek to control the movement that is demanding change.

By becoming part of the Together For Yes campaign, they are in a position to push back against more far reaching reforms.

Frustrated

Some activists are frustrated at how the official Together For Yes campaign has tried to moderate the message of pro-choice campaigners.

Brid explained that campaigners are encouraged to use the language of "care and compassion" rather than basing arguments on a woman's right to choose.

She said campaign leaders claim talking of "choice" sounds too flippant.

"They say it sounds like you're going to McDonald's for a burger and you might choose this or that one," she said.

The Catholic Church have rocked Ireland. Just last year, the remains of hundreds of babies were discovered in a sewage tank at a mother and baby home in Tuam, County Galway.

This memory is fresh in the mind of activists, who want to "leave the old Ireland behind", says Brid.

"If the conservative Catholic right get their way, they won't stop at holding onto the 8th," she said. "They will start looking at the law to stop abortion pills."

It is a disgrace that governments still try to restrict a woman's right to choose.

Reproductive rights are central to women's ability to direct their own lives.

Ireland's abortion law is a product of a society that tries to control every aspects of women's sexual freedom and life choices.

But the battle to change it could have much wider implications.

"They say the floodgates will open for abortion on demand," said Brid.

"I say the floodgates will open for the fight against the gender pay gap, for affordable childcare, free contraception and to end the housing crisis."

"The floodgates will open in terms of the kind of demands that the women's movement can make in this society. All of these are class issues."

The vote will have worldwide significance in the fight for reproductive justice. A Yes vote will be a huge step forward for everyone fighting for women's rights.

But the women it will affect most are women like Sinead and Eimear, who are often spoken for but rarely listened to by the powerful.

"When the 8th is repealed it will give people the choice," said Eimear. "People often refer to 'those women'—but we are those women."

Sinead added, "It feels hard that in 2018 we have to put a face to a story. I hope we don't have to again."

WHAT WE STAND FOR

These are the core politics of the Socialist Workers Party.

INDEPENDENT WORKING CLASS ACTION

Under capitalism workers' labour creates all profit. A socialist society can only be constructed when the working class seizes control of the means of production and democratically plans how they are used.

REVOLUTION NOT REFORM

The present system cannot be patched up or reformed as the established Labour and trade union leaders say.

It has to be overthrown. Capitalism systematically degrades the natural world. Ending environmental crisis means creating a new society.

THERE IS NO PARLIAMENTARY ROAD

The structures of the present parliament, army, police and judiciary cannot be taken over and used by the working class. They grew up under capitalism and are designed to protect the ruling class against the workers.

The working class needs an entirely different kind of state—a workers' state based upon councils of workers' delegates and a workers' militia.

At most parliamentary activity can be used to make propaganda against the present system.

Only the mass action of the workers themselves can destroy the system.

INTERNATIONALISM

The struggle for socialism is part of a worldwide struggle. We campaign for solidarity with workers in other countries.

We oppose everything which turns workers from one country against those from other countries.

We oppose racism and imperialism. We oppose all immigration controls.

We support the right of black people and other oppressed groups to organise their own defence. We support all genuine national liberation movements.

The experience of Russia demonstrates that a socialist revolution cannot survive in isolation in one country.

In Russia the result was state capitalism, not socialism. In Eastern Europe and China a similar system was later established by Stalinist parties.

We support the struggle of workers in these countries against both private and state capitalism.

We are for real social, economic and political equality of women. We are for an end to all forms of discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.

We defend the right of believers to practise their religion without state interference.

THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

To achieve socialism the most militant sections of the working class have to be organised into a revolutionary socialist party.

Such a party can only be built by activity in the mass organisations of the working class.

We have to prove in practice to other workers that reformist leaders and reformist ideas are opposed to their own interests. We have to build a rank and file movement within the unions.

To join us, turn to page 16 or go to www.swp.org.uk or phone 020 7840 5602 for more information

{ SOCIALIST WORKER } PUBLIC MEETINGS

BIRMINGHAM: CITY CENTRE

'Kill all the Gentlemen'—book launch with author Martin Empson

Wed 6 Jun, 7pm,
Birmingham LGBT Centre,
38/40 Holloway Circus,
B1 1EQ

CARDIFF

The Fight for Trans Liberation—pamphlet launch with author Laura Miles

Wed 13 Jun, 7.30pm,
Little Man Coffee Company,
Bridge Street,
CF10 2EE

LONDON: WALTHAM FOREST

A Rebel's Guide to Martin Luther King—book launch with author Yuri Prasad

Wed 6 Jun, 7.30pm,
William Morris
Community Centre,
6-8 Greenleaf Rd,
Walthamstow,
E17 6QQ

{ SOCIALIST WORKER } BRANCH MEETINGS

Weekly meetings to discuss political issues and our local interventions. All welcome.

ABERDEEN

Marx@200—the revolutionary ideas of Karl Marx

Wed 30 May, 6pm,
Belmont Cinema Cafe,
49 Belmont St,
AB10 1JS

BARNSELEY

Marxism and economics—the long depression

Thu 31 May, 7pm,
YMCA, Blucher St,
S70 1AP

BIRMINGHAM: CITY CENTRE

Do we need violence to get real social change?

Wed 13 Jun, 7pm,
Birmingham LGBT Centre,
38/40 Holloway Circus,
B1 1EQ

BOLTON

Police, racism and the state

Wed 30 May, 7pm,
Bolton Socialist Club,
16 Wood St (off
Bradshawgate), BL1 1DY

BRADFORD

How women won the vote

Thu 31 May, 7pm,
Glyde House,
Little Horton Lane, BD5 0BQ

BRISTOL

After the massacre in Gaza—how can Palestine be free?

Wed 30 May, 7.30pm,
YHA, 14 Narrow Quay,
BS1 4QA

CARDIFF

Marx@200—the revolutionary ideas of Karl Marx

Wed 6 Jun, 7.30pm,
Cathays Community Centre,
Cathays Terrace,
CF24 4HX

Fifty years since 1968 The year the world caught fire

BRIGHTON AND HOVE

Thu 31 May, 7.30pm,
Friends Meeting House,
Ship St, BN1 1AF

BURNLEY AND PENDLE

Wed 30 May, 7.30pm,
Red Triangle Cafe,
160 St James's St,
BB11 1NR

COLCHESTER

Thu 31 May, 7.30pm,
The New Inn,
Chapel Street South,
CO2 7AX

GLASGOW

Thu 31 May, 7pm,
Avant Garde,
33-44 King St,
Merchant City,
G1 5QT

HULL

Thu 21 Jun, 7pm,
Cafe licious,
104 Cottingham Rd,
HU6 7RZ

LEEDS: CITY CENTRE

Thu 31 May, 7pm,
The Swarthmore
Education Centre,
2-7 Woodhouse Square,
LS3 1AD

LONDON: SOUTH

Wed 30 May, 7pm,
Vida Walsh Centre,
2b Saltoun Rd (near Effra Rd,
facing Windrush Square),
SW2 1EP

NORWICH

Thu 31 May, 7.30pm,
Vauxhall Centre,
Johnson Place,
NR2 2SA

SHEFFIELD: CITY CENTRE

Thu 31 May, 7pm,
Central United
Reformed Church,
60 Norfolk St (near
Crucible Theatre),
S1 2JB

CHESTERFIELD

How can we keep the NHS public?

Thu 31 May, 7.30pm,
Chesterfield Library,
New Beetwell St,
S40 1QN

DONCASTER

Marx@200—the revolutionary ideas of Karl Marx

Tue 29 May, 7.30pm,
Railway Hotel,
West St, DN1 3AA

DUDLEY

Marx@200—the revolutionary ideas of Karl Marx

Wed 30 May, 8pm,
The What Centre,
23 Coventry St,
Stourbridge,
DY8 1EP

EDINBURGH

Is there a new Cold War? Spies, lies and state control

Wed 30 May, 7.30pm,
Friends Meeting House,
7 Victoria St,
EH1 2JL

GLASGOW

Marx@200—the revolutionary ideas of Karl Marx

Sun 27 May, 4.30pm,
The Griffin,
266 Bath St, G2 4JP

HUDDERSFIELD

After the massacre in Gaza—how can Palestine be free?

Wed 30 May, 6.30pm,
Brian Jackson House,
2 New North Parade (near
both train and bus stations),
HD1 5JP

LANCASTER AND MORECAMBE

Syria—why more bombing won't stop the horror

Thu 31 May, 7pm,
Friends Meeting House,
Meeting House Lane,
LA1 1TX

LEEDS: CITY CENTRE

The 1983 Jamaican Labour rebellion

Thu 7 Jun, 7pm,
West Indian Community
Centre,
10 Laycock Pl,
LS7 3AJ

LIVERPOOL

After the massacre in Gaza—How can Palestine be free?

Wed 6 Jun, 7pm,
Friends Meeting House,
22 School Ln, L1 3BT

LONDON: CENTRAL

Gun and knife crime—why are young people killing each other?

Thu 31 May, 6.15pm,
Room 235,
UCL Foster Court Building,
Malet Pl,
WC1E 6BT

LONDON: HACKNEY

Gun and knife crime—why are young people killing each other?

Thu 31 May, 7.30pm,
The Round Chapel,
2 Powerscroft Rd,
E5 0PU

LONDON: HARINGEY

What's so special about the working class?

Wed 30 May, 7.30pm,
St John Vianney Church Hall,
386 West Green Rd,
N15 3QH

LONDON: ISLINGTON

Why does work make us sick?

Wed 30 May, 7pm,
The Old Fire Station,
84 Mayton St, N7 6QT

LONDON: LEWISHAM

The Windrush scandal—taking on the myths of immigration

Wed 30 May, 7.30pm,
West Greenwich Community
and Arts Centre,
141 Greenwich High Rd,
SE10 8JA

LONDON: TOWER HAMLETS

Why we hate Mondays—Marxism and alienation

Wed 30 May, 7pm,
Epainos Church,
Lichfield Rd,
E3 5AT

LONDON: WALTHAM FOREST

Is the working class changing?

Wed 30 May, 7.30pm,
William Morris
Community Centre,
6-8 Greenleaf Rd,
Walthamstow, E17 6QQ

LUTON

What causes gun and knife crime?

Wed 6 Jun, 7.30pm,
Stockwood Hotel,
41-43 Stockwood Crescent
(enter via London Rd car park),
LU1 3SS

MANCHESTER: CENTRAL

Why we hate Mondays—Marxism and alienation

Wed 30 May, 7pm,
Friends Meeting House,
6 Mount St,
M2 5NS

OXFORD

Why is the working class the most revolutionary class?

Wed 30 May, 7.30pm,
Restore Building,
Manzil Way,
OX4 1YH

POOLE AND DORCHESTER

Can there ever be a just war?

Thu 7 Jun, 7.30pm,
Dorford Centre,
2 Bridport Rd,
DT1 1RR

PORTSMOUTH

What would a socialist society look like?

Wed 30 May, 7.30pm,
Somerstown
Community Centre,
River's St, PO5 4EZ

SCARBOROUGH

VIDEO: Why do we celebrate the Russian revolution?

Wed 30 May, 7.30pm,
Tap and Spile,
94 Falsgrave Rd, YO12 5AZ

SOUTHAMPTON

Iran, Israel and the threat of wider war

Wed 30 May, 7.30pm,
Central Baptist Church Hall,
Devonshire Rd, SO15 2GY

SWANSEA

Why we hate Mondays—Marxism and alienation

Thu 31 May, 7.30pm,
Brynmill Community Centre,
St Albans Rd,
SA2 0BP

TELFORD

Palestine, antisemitism and defending Corbyn

Wed 30 May, 7.30pm,
Carriages, The Parade,
Wellington,
TF1 1PY

WOLVERHAMPTON

AND WALSALL

Music, culture and resistance

Wed 30 May, 7.30pm,
Wild Bytes Cafe,
Darlington St,
WV1 4HW

{ MOVEMENT EVENTS }

DORCHESTER

The rise of the new right in Europe

Sat 26 May, 1.30pm,
Colliton Club,
Colliton Park, DT1 1XJ.
Organised by Dorset Socialists

NATIONAL

Marxism 2018—a festival of socialist ideas

Thu 5 till Sun 8 July,
central London. A four-day political festival hosted by the Socialist Workers Party. marxismfestival.org.uk
Speakers include Ilan Pappé, Janet Alder, John Bellamy Foster and Ghada Kharmi
Together Against Trump—national demonstration
Fri 13 July, Nationwide.
Go to Together Against Trump: national demo on Facebook

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Fascists can't sing—banned songs a hit at Gate Theatre

A new musical collaboration between a west London theatre and the English National Opera sticks two fingers up to the Nazis, says **Jasmine Fischer**

EFFIGIES OF Wickedness brings together a wide range of influences from cabaret, musical theatre and opera into one hugely entertaining show.

It features songs from 1920 to 1939 that were banned by the Nazis.

It is the first collaboration—hopefully of many—between the English National Opera and the Gate Theatre in north London.

A combination of the relaxed cabaret atmosphere, amazing voices, witty audience interaction, incredible costume designs and the strong anti-Nazi theme draws you in from beginning to end.

Through the performance of songs that the Nazis banned, the audience gets taken on a journey through a tumultuous and tragic period.

It begins in 1920 during a revolutionary period which had created an exciting atmosphere that anything was possible.

It ends in 1939 when the Nazis were in power and democracy had been smashed.

This performance is a look back at a time when the underground scene was full of artists such as playwright and poet Bertolt Brecht and composer and painter Arnold Schoenberg.

But this isn't a show that simply reflects the past.

The themes throughout are still very relevant as many of these struggles continue today.

Lucy McCormick brilliantly performs Brecht and Hans Eisler's song Paragraph 218 (Abortion is illegal).

We are reminded that the slogan, "My body, my choice" is far from a historical observation. Thousands of women are fighting to repeal the 8th Amendment in Ireland, which



PHIL CORNWELL in *Effigies of Wickedness* (above) and **Lucy McCormick** (left)

criminalises abortion.

Another stand out performer is Le Gateau Chocolat, whose incredible voice almost moved me to tears at one point.

Their song was penned by an artist who was able to use it as a "ticket out of Germany" during a period when the Nazis had banned black people from working.

Today far right and fascist organisations such as the AfD in Germany, the Front National in France and the

Freedom Party in Austria continue to grow and get huge votes. This serves as an important reminder to say "never again" and why we must continue to challenge the far-right.

I immediately wanted to go back and watch it again.

If you hate Nazis and love a good cabaret—and even if you're indifferent about cabaret—go and see this show.

For information and tickets go to bit.ly/SongsNazis

Portraits that tell deeper stories about their subjects

EXHIBITION

VICTORIA CROWE—BEYOND LIKENESS

Scottish National Portrait Gallery,
1 Queen Street,
Edinburgh EH2 1JD
Until 18 November. Free

VICTORIA Crowe's portraits strongly reflect the emotional and intellectual relationship that she formed with her subjects.

Each portrait brings out something of the social background, upbringing, and passions of the

individual depicted.

There's a fine portrait of Ole Lippmann, leading organiser of the Danish Resistance.

It reflects on the tragic consequences of the raid by RAF bombers on the Gestapo headquarters in Copenhagen in 1945.

Bombs

Lippmann had planned the raid to save the lives of resistance fighters imprisoned there. But some of the bombs hit the wrong building, killing 56 schoolchildren.

Ole was haunted by this

tragedy, a point made in the excellent artist's notes to the painting.

Another fine portrait is of the artist's son Ben, who tragically died of cancer in his twenties.

In the background a military exercise is taking place in preparation for the first Gulf War of 1991. It reminds us of contemporary wars and today's anti-war movement.

Among several portraits of people from very privileged backgrounds, we also see Janet Vaugh, physician, researcher,



Detail of a portrait of psychologist RD Laing

and "determined socialist from a privileged background". She was a witness to the Spanish Civil War. She was also a member of the first medical team to enter Belsen concentration camp in 1945, where they worked flat out to save hundreds of prisoners from death.

Go and see this exhibition. The portraits are fantastic and you will learn a lot about the passions, fears and attitudes of the people portrayed.

Gordon Davie

EXHIBITION

SHAPE OF LIGHT: 100 YEARS OF PHOTOGRAPHY AND ABSTRACT ART

Until 14 October

Tate Modern, London SE1 9TG
£18 or free for members

THIS exhibition captures the complicated relationship between abstract art and photography.

The exhibition features Alvin Langdon Coburn's 1917 Vortographs series to the new wave of contemporary artists developing unconventional techniques impacted by technology.

Antony Cairns' E.I. CTY1 (2018) is a good example. This is a collection of



Antony Cairns' LDN5_051 (2017)

45 photographs taken in major cities from all over the world, displayed in a framework of dismantled Kindle screens.

The concluding installation entitled *Rock is a River* (2018) by Maya Rochat pulls together distressed photography and projection. The two pieces were both created specifically for this exhibit.

The exhibition forces viewers to challenge their perspectives of reality.

Lois Browne

TOP 5 BOOKS

Bestsellers at Bookmarks, the socialist Bookshop

- 1 **The fire last time—1968 and After**
Chris Harman
- 2 **May made me**
Mitchell Abidor
- 3 **A rebel's guide to Martin Luther King**
Yuri Prasad
- 4 **'Kill all the Gentlemen'**
Martin Empson
- 5 **Politics Of The Mind—Marxism and Mental Distress**
Iain Ferguson

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bookmarksbookshop.co.uk
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While most people across the world reacted in horror at the slaughter in Gaza, supporters of Israel began working out a narrative to vilify the dead.

Defenders of Israel condemned those who were killed as “violent terrorists”, who had hijacked peaceful protests.

In fact there is no clear-cut division between “peaceful” protests and violent resistance.

The history of the Palestinian struggle has always involved mass mobilisations. It has also involved some heroic armed struggle waged by guerrilla organisations, which focussed on Israel’s military defeat and enjoyed popular support.

There’s a complicated and contradictory relationship between the two. Most Palestinian revolts have involved elements of both.

Between 1936 and 1939 a great Palestinian revolt involving mass strikes, riots and demonstrations, and guerrilla struggle rocked the British Empire.

British rulers in Palestine blamed the “official” Palestinian leaders for the uprising. In fact it was organised and coordinated by local popular committees.

The revolt was so widespread that the British army had to fight to reoccupy Palestinian cities, towns and villages. Palestinians in the countryside formed armed groups to fend off the British.

There was already mass support for guerrilla fighters. Months before in 1935 the Arab guerrilla leader Izz al-Din al-Qassam was killed fighting in a courageous last stand against the British.

Strikes

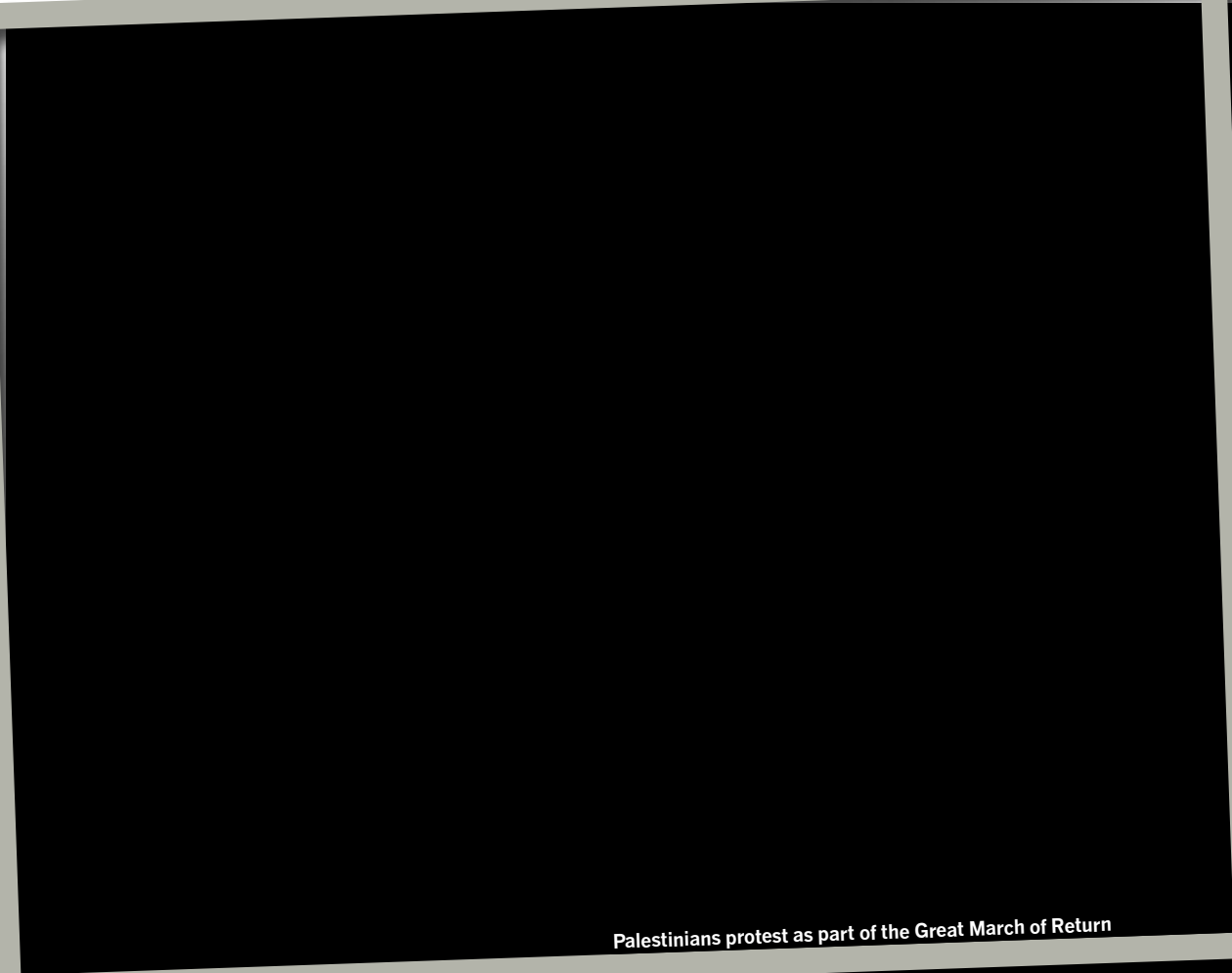
His death resonated across Palestine. More than 3,000 Palestinians—mostly workers and peasants—turned his funeral into a demonstration that was followed by strikes in several Palestinian cities.

A revival in armed struggle took control of much of the countryside. And then the cities Jaffa, Beersheba, Gaza, Jericho, Bethlehem, Ramallah and the Old City in Jerusalem fell.

Yet the revolt was defeated, largely down to the shocking brutality used by the British with the help of the Zionist colonisers. But it was also held back by the Palestinian “official” leadership of rich land-owning families.

The first Palestinian guerrilla groups were formed among ordinary Palestinians frustrated at this official leadership’s weakness.

During the revolt the committees threatened the authority and interests of the landowners, who used their



HOW CAN PALESTINE BE FREE?

Palestinians have bravely fought Israel through both armed struggle and mass mobilisations. But, argues Nick Clark, it will take revolution in the Middle East to win liberation



Fatah faction leader Yasser Arafat in 1970

“official” positions to control and shut the movement down.

That same problem has faced every Palestinian resistance movement ever since.

After Israel was created a new national liberation movement emerged among a section of Palestinian refugees.

Fatah was formed by wealthier middle class Palestinians who became business owners, government officials and professionals in Gulf Arab states. From neighbouring Arab



Arab ruling classes hoped to control the Palestinian resistance

countries they tried to build a movement of “mass revolutionary violence” against Israel.

As the leading group in the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), Fatah fought some heroic battles.

The idea was to inspire support for Palestine that would pressure the Arab leaders into war on their behalf.

The goal was to become the ruling class of a new Palestinian state in partnership with other Arab countries. So Fatah’s

leaders depended on the support of Arab rulers—and that meant keeping tight control over the movement.

Palestinians in refugee camps in Arab countries were poor and marginalised. But Fatah wouldn’t organise the type of resistance from below—strikes and protests—that would challenge the Arab leaders.

In the 1930s guerrilla struggle had been a challenge to the Arab ruling class. Now it was used by the Palestinian leadership to keep the movement in check.

For their part the Arab rulers hoped to use the Palestinian resistance through the PLO. But none of them were committed to a direct challenge to imperialism. Jordan, where the PLO was based, was propped up by the British.

In 1970 the PLO had grown so powerful that the Jordanian regime launched a war to crush it. It slaughtered thousands of Palestinians in what became known as Black September.

The leadership’s insistence on not challenging Arab rulers meant they refused to take action until it was too late.

Their focus on guerrilla struggle also meant that when Palestinians in Palestine rose up in mass revolt, the factions of the PLO were caught out.

THE FIRST Intifada in 1987 saw protests, riots and strikes sweep across Palestine—again organised by local activists’ committees.

This huge popular revolt shook the Israeli occupation much more than the PLO’s limited guerrilla attacks. And it inspired large protests across the Middle East.

More than 40 years after Palestinians were expelled, the mass revolt of the Intifada forced Israel into talks with the PLO leadership.

Yet the start of the “peace process”, beginning with the Oslo accords in 1993, led the PLO to give up resistance and make major concessions.

The peace process offered the PLO the chance to lead a Palestinian Authority (PA), under the thumb of Israel, with partial control of the West Bank and Gaza.

The hope of even semi-statehood saw the PLO give up its claim to the rest of Palestine. That meant effectively abandoning the right of refugees to return to their homes.

It also saw the PLO renounce armed struggle and agree to police the Palestinian population in coordination with Israel.

It was transformed from an organisation of resistance into a tool of the occupation.

Despite the fate of the PLO, new resistance groups make the same mistake.

Hamas and other Islamist groups emerged as an alternative to the nationalist PLO during the First Intifada. Hamas’s rejection of the peace

process meant it played a leading role in the Second Intifada, which erupted in 2000 and had much greater focus on armed struggle.

Because of its refusal to give up resistance, Hamas won Palestinian elections in 2006. Fatah led a coup attempt against Hamas in Gaza—orchestrated by the US and backed by Israel—the following year.

The siege of Gaza properly began after Fatah was defeated.

It shouldn’t be surprising if claims that most of the Palestinians killed on the border protests were Hamas members turn out to be true. Its resistance has made it a beacon to young Palestinians who have grown up under siege.

But like Fatah, Hamas also looked to support from other Middle Eastern regimes rather than struggle from below. It had the backing of Iran and the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt.

YET MORE than a decade of attempting to govern the Gaza Strip under siege has weakened it—made worse by the defeat of the Arab revolutions of 2011.

The revolutions that spread across the Middle East shook Arab regimes to their core. The Egyptian revolution toppled Hosni Mubarak, whose dictatorship was instrumental in maintaining the Gaza siege.

Revolutionaries in Egypt also took up the slogans of the Palestinian resistance, stormed the Israeli embassy and demanded an end to the siege.

Hamas’s parent organisation the Muslim Brotherhood took part in the revolution. Its leader Mohammed Morsi was elected Egyptian president.

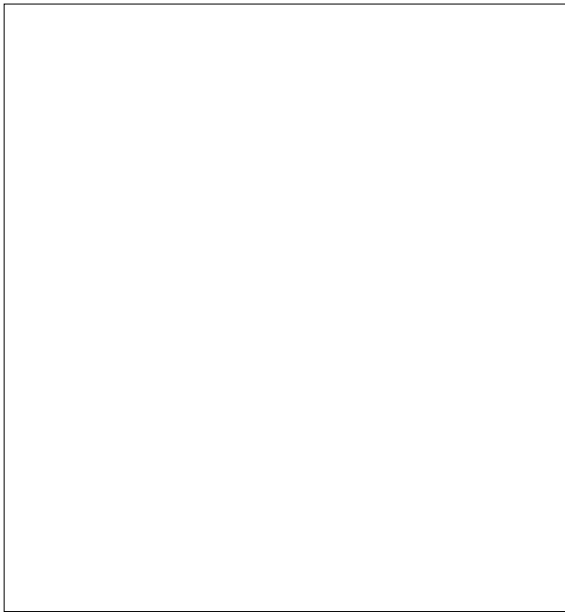
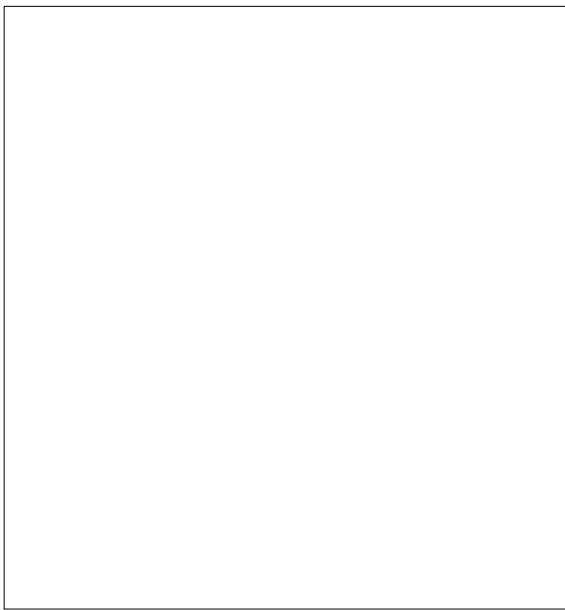
Hamas also refused to back Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad against an uprising, breaking its relationship with Iran.

Yet when the military overthrew Morsi and the Syrian regime began winning, Hamas became isolated.

Recently it has cut deals with the new Egyptian regime—a close ally of Israel and the US—that have seen it move away from armed resistance.

The turn to mass protests is a new tactic for Hamas. But Hamas’s leader Yahya Sinwar also reached an agreement with Egypt to stop the protests escalating into a new conflict with Israel.

Egyptian dictator



Palestinian resistance group Hamas has relied on both an armed wing (top) and mass mobilisations (above)

Mohammed el-Sisi is right to be worried. Palestinians’ resistance has inspired protests across the Middle East that threatened repressive regimes like his.

Palestinians have been closest to liberation when their struggle has been part of mass resistance across the region.

And Palestinian leaders’ failure to look to the power of the Arab working class has often left resistance isolated and led to compromises with Israel.

This isn’t about counter posing ‘peaceful’ protest to violent resistance—or condemning armed struggle. But it is about saying there is a different vision for Palestinian freedom.

The return of the revolutionary process across the Middle East—and mass resistance from below—is the only way for Palestinians to be free.

PALESTINE RESISTANCE, REVOLUTION AND THE STRUGGLE FOR FREEDOM

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Accounting for failure—how bosses cook the books

Accountants might seem removed from the business of making profits, but they are central, explains **Tomáš Tengely-Evans**

THE COLLAPSE of the outsourcing giant Carillion has lifted the lid on the cosy relationship between bosses and their accountants.

An MPs’ report last week slammed the KPMG accountants as “complicit” in Carillion’s “aggressive accounting judgements”. They just accepted bosses’ inflated—or downright fictitious—revenue figures.

And, during 19 years of working together, KPMG pocketed £29 million.

Accountants like to present themselves as neutral mathematicians. In reality, accountants are an integral cog in the capitalist system.

Modern accounting developed in response to the needs of a new class of merchants in the Middle Ages—and has grown into a global industry in its own right.

The market is dominated by the “big four”—Deloitte, PwC, EY and KPMG. They work the accounts for all of the top 100 multinationals and 96 percent of the top 250 midsize corporations.

It’s big business for the big four—with a total revenue just shy of £100 billion in 2017.

Greased

Corruption scandals greased the wheels for mergers. In 2002 the big eight became the big seven after US multinational Arthur Andersen was forced to sever its accounting arm after a corruption scandal.

Arthur Andersen accountants had shredded thousands of documents relating to Enron.

Similarly to Carillion, it was posting large profits—right up until it became the largest corporate bankruptcy in US history.

Arthur Andersen was the favourite firm of Tony

SOME ACCOUNTANTS get £12,500 a week to gut Carillion

Blair’s New Labour, which used it to push privatisation of hospitals and schools.

Private Finance Initiative (PFI) schemes show how accounting firms profit at each stage.

Accountants are brought in when PFI contracts are drawn up, make money auditing the firms who get the contracts, then clean up when it all goes wrong.

This risk-proof business model extends into all accounting firms’ operations.

They helped banks lie in the run-up to the financial crisis in 2007.

Northern Rock’s auditor PwC even helped it sell mortgages to raise funds on the money markets—a sales operation key to its downfall.

And when trouble finally struck the banks, the same accounting firms were brought in.

They don’t mind if it all goes wrong, because that’s when profiteering really begins.

Accountants manage “administration”—when a company is broken up, unprofitable parts are shut

down and profitable parts are sold off. Or sometimes they carry out “liquidation”—when the company is shut down.

This is presented as if the accountants are third parties who’ve arrived to mop up the pieces.

In reality, it’s anything but an impartial process.

There’s often a revolving door between accounting and the firms that they audit or later break up.

Steel giant Caparo Industries went into administration in 2016.

Its director David Dancaister had previously worked for PwC and managed to keep his lucrative job in another part of the business.

Expense

The aim is always to recover value for shareholders—at the expense of workers.

PwC were the biggest winners from Carillion. They had made over £21 million just by March—£8.5 million from Carillion, £6.5 million from the Tory government and £6.1 million from workers’ pension schemes.

PwC was appointed to manage the liquidation because it was the only one of the firms without a direct conflict of interest.

Together the big four still trousered £72 million.

With PwC partners making £12,500 a week, they have every incentive to milk that as long as possible.

The whole racket calls for a settling of accounts with the capitalist system.



When it all goes wrong, that’s when the profiteering really begins

Privatisation lies at the root of rail chaos

by SARAH BATES

THE TORIES are letting rail company fat cats off the hook while privatisation is causing transport misery for passengers.

Millions of passengers on Great Northern, Southern, Thameslink and Northern trains faced cancellations and delays this week as the rail network went into “meltdown”.

And, hapless transport secretary Chris Grayling was last week forced to announce the renationalisation of the east coast rail franchise.

He’s appointed a group under government control, led by the firm Arup, to run the service.

Grayling defended the move, saying he wanted to create a new “East Coast Partnership” from 2020 anyway, which would combine train and track operations.

His announcement last November that he was allowing the east coast franchise to be terminated early represented a bail out for the bosses.

The line was run by Virgin

BACK STORY

Virgin East Coast train line was renationalised last week

● Rocketing ticket prices and squeezes on workers have run down the service

● Now bosses will be allowed to cancel their contract early, despite owing millions

● Millions of passengers face misery as new timetables are badly implemented

● Privatisation is to blame for ongoing travel chaos

Trains East Coast (Vtec), which was 90 percent owned by Stagecoach and 10 percent by Virgin. They were supposed to pay the government £2 billion to run the franchise until 2023.

But Grayling says they’re not now liable for the money.

This is the third time in ten years that a company has ended its contract on the east coast line early. The line was under state control between 2009 to 2015, but Vtec won the contract when it was up



VIRGIN EAST Coast has been run into the ground by greedy bosses

for privatisation again.

When the line was run by government firm Directly Operated Railways it made a billion pounds in profit. In 2017 passenger numbers in Britain fell under 5 billion for the first time in a decade.

One RMT transport union member who works on the

east coast line said, “The management have no clue.

“They have given us duties which mean we are unable to deliver a good service.”

Grayling’s plans to take back control of east coast come just at a time when rail bosses are shaking up timetables in order to make more

money—causing travel chaos.

On Monday, Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR) had a huge revision of their timetable and rescheduled every train.

Normally train companies make minor changes to timetables, but GTR have started from scratch—with huge con-

sequences. One in seven of its services were cancelled on Monday morning.

Some 17 percent were delayed by at least five minutes. And management are desperate to blame anyone but themselves for the disruption.

Quoted in the Guardian newspaper, commuter Darren Riley said staff at Bolton station were “polite and apologetic but not particularly helpful”.

“One of them told me he was a senior manager and blamed much of the disruption on the unions,” he said.

“He continued to blame the unions before asking what my job was and so found out that I work for a trade union.”

Despite Vtec ducking out of the contract and avoiding billions in payments, Grayling said he won’t stop its parent companies bidding for transport contracts in the future.

The east coast scandal and GTR both show that a well-funded, safe and affordable transport system should not be left to the mercy of private transport bosses.

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‘Why are we worth less?’ ask strikers at Tesco hub

by ALISTAIR FARROW

WORKERS AT a Tesco distribution hub in Dagenham, east London have struck over pay. Their action is raising wider questions about how workers can take on and defeat the retail giants.

Hundreds of workers in the Usdaw union joined a 24-hour strike from 10pm last Thursday.

They are demanding pay parity with workers doing the same job 15 minutes drive away in Thurrock.

Workers have been offered a pay rise of less than 3 percent by bosses. They are currently on £9.75 an hour.

Workers at Thurrock get paid £1.38 an hour more.

“We all pay the same rent, we all pay the same prices for shopping—why are we worth less than other people?” asked Tim.

“Tesco said they want to be an ‘upper quartile payer’ for the sector,” Usdaw rep Simon Vincent told Socialist Worker.

That would mean increasing pay by £1.75 an hour according to the firm, which describes the rise as an “aspiration”.

“Well, I have an ‘aspiration’ to win the lottery, but I don’t think it’s going to happen,” Sam told Socialist Worker.

Nearly 550 workers were involved in the strike ballot which saw a 63 percent vote for strikes on a turnout of over 70 percent.

“Pay is the biggest issue, but everybody’s job is getting harder,” said Jack. “Morale is at an all-time low.”

Negotiated

Another demand of the dispute is over paid breaks. Two years ago workers negotiated a 15-minute paid tea break.

“The performance clock was supposed to stop when you started your break,” said Sam. “Management reneged on that—now it’s part of our dispute to get that back.”

Workers also told Socialist Worker about the brutal nature of their work. It’s a refrigerated distribution centre which is held at 1 degree centigrade.

And if people are working in the freezer section the temperature drops to -21 degrees centigrade.

“We can move up to 30 tonnes

BACK STORY

A walkout at a Tesco distribution hub threatens backlogs throughout the chain’s network

● Strikers are demanding pay parity with workers doing the same job a few miles away

● But Usdaw union members are also fighting to defend conditions

● Workers say morale is at an all time low and say agency staff bear the brunt of bosses’ attacks

● Escalating the action can have a huge impact on Tesco

over the course of a shift and they say that’s not worth £10 an hour,” said Jack.

Another worker said he can walk between 10 and 15 miles on a shift. And as bad as things are for contract workers, agency workers have it worse.

“Our overtime pay rate comes in after 37.5 hours a week, but for agency workers it comes in after 48 hours,” said Tim.

Agency

For those first 48 hours agency workers get the minimum wage, which is topped up if they hit performance targets.

Agency workers are effectively forced to work savage hours because of poverty pay.

“The other week we had one agency worker who did 61 hours,” Tim said.

Turnover is very high. Workers are issued a new “decamp”, or identification, number when they start.

“6,000 people have registered on the system in the last five years,” said Sam.

Just last month 53 workers stopped working at the site. “If Tesco paid a bit more money on wages people would stick around,” Jack said.

A strike planned for this Thursday has been called off after Tesco agreed to talks at the Acas conciliation service.

The action threatened backlogs throughout Tesco’s network.

The firm drafted in scab labour and got managers from other sites to fill in.

Workers’ names have been changed



USDRAW UNION members on the picket line

PICTURE: GUY SMALLMAN

Just in time production makes the bosses more vulnerable to walkouts

THE TESCO workers’ strike has had a big impact.

The Dagenham site services some 80 percent of the smaller Tesco Express stores—nearly 300—in London.

Just-in-time distribution is designed to keep bosses’ costs as low as possible in order to maximise profits.

As little money as possible is spent on storage facilities at smaller stores. Products are unloaded and put directly onto the shelves as much as possible.

In order to streamline distribution like this, larger and larger distribution centres are needed to coordinate deliveries from.

This creates huge hubs, or choke points, in firms like Tesco’s distribution network.

Vulnerable

This means firms that use these techniques are increasingly vulnerable to strikes. And workers have taken advantage of that.

Jack explained to Socialist Worker how the Dagenham site “was built five years ago to deal with the expansion of the Tesco Express stores.”

He said that the size of the Dagenham site means other depots won’t be able to cope with the same volume.

“They can’t service Express



Distribution workers have a lot of power in their hands

PICTURE: GUY SMALLMAN

London without us,” said Jack. “The logistics are an absolute nightmare to move this work to other sites.

“They can move some of the work we do here up to the site at Peterborough.

But then they have to move work done at Peterborough up to Hinckley and from Hinckley to somewhere else and so on.

“The problem is there’s only so much capacity in the system as a whole.”

Historically low levels of strikes have allowed bosses to stretch their distribution networks as thinly as possible.

Now they are terrified other workers will get ideas.

“Their worry is the strike will spread to other sites,” said Jack.

They have also begun to forget who produces and distributes the products they sell.

Workers say bosses have ploughed millions of pounds into breaking the strike by getting extra agency workers and managers from other sites in.

Some agency workers who live far away are being paid for their four hour round trips as well as an eight hour shift.

All this means strikes spreading could have a devastating effect.

IN BRIEF

Protest as Tories ignore racist ‘joke’

UP TO 80 people protested outside the newly-elected meeting of Pendle council in Lancashire since the reinstatement of Tory Rosemary Carroll last week.

Carroll was suspended from the Tories and became an independent councillor after she shared a racist comment on Facebook.

Pendle council would have been hung had the Tories not brought her back into their fold.

Keith Chadwick

Fairway care centre fight has not ended

ANTI-CUTS activists protested outside the newly-elected Birmingham city council's first full meeting on Tuesday.

Campaigners have been fighting since November to save the Fairway adult day care centre from closure.

The council wants service users to go to other daycare centres or employ carers in their own homes.

But the campaign says the Fairway is an important service and the council should guarantee its future.

Battle is coming at Magna Exteriors

WORKERS AT a car parts manufacturers are balloting for strikes and an overtime ban over pay and conditions.

The 270 workers are employed by Magna Exteriors at Halewood on Merseyside and Ellesmere Port in Cheshire. They make car parts for Nissan, Vauxhall and Bentley Motors.

They are fighting a two-year pay freeze and bosses' plans to ditch shift premiums.

The Unite union says that the shift premiums are worth up to 23 percent of wages. The ballot closes on 25 May.

A sequel to strikes at Picturehouse

WORKERS AT some sites of the Picturehouse cinema chain are set to walk out after they delivered an 86 percent vote for more strikes in their long-running dispute.

The Bectu union members are fighting for demands including maternity pay, paternity pay, union recognition and the London Living Wage of £10.20 an hour.

Strikes are on track for the Jubilee Line

TUBE DRIVERS on London's Jubilee Line will strike on 6 and 14 June over the imposition of new rosters and timetables.

“Drivers are angry at the impact on work-life balance. Managers should take unions seriously rather than wading in with the big stick,” said RMT union general secretary Mick Cash.

UNIONS' FESTIVAL



HUNDREDS OF people joined the With Banners Held High festival last Sunday in Wakefield, West Yorkshire. Those taking part included Labour shadow chancellor John McDonnell, TUC general secretary Frances O'Grady and Jon Trickett MP.

PICTURE: NEIL TERRY

RESTAURANT WORKERS

TGI Fridays strikers tip the balance in pay fight

by ALISTAIR FARROW

TGI FRIDAYS workers and their supporters protested in Covent Garden, central London last Friday.

Workers at the West End restaurant were joined on strike by those at the Milton Keynes on the same day.

They are courageously fighting against a firm whose boss, Karen Forester, took home £1.3 million last year.

The strike is “over a tip policy change which could cost waiting staff £250 a month in lost wages,” said the workers’ union, Unite.

Kitchen

“In January this year we were given two days notice that 40 percent of our tips would be given to kitchen staff,” said Natalie from the Covent Garden restaurant.

“Kitchen staff should have higher pay in the first place,” said Bonnie from the Milton Keynes restaurant.

“The company has pitted us against each other,” she told Socialist Worker. “Most of the kitchen team are with us, but are not in the union.”

Bonnie described how bosses had “stopped our free



PROTESTING IN Covent Garden

PICTURE: GUY SMALLMAN

meals when we’re on a 12-hour shift. Now they’ve pissed us off, they’ve taken it too far.”

Workers from the recent McDonald’s strikes came down to offer solidarity.

“The support we got for our strikes was important to pass on,” said Lewis. “Other workers need to feel the support of the wider trade union movement.”

Workers at two other restaurants—the Trafford Centre, Greater Manchester and Piccadilly in central

London—have also voted to strike. The yes vote was 100 percent on a 63 percent turnout, with the first strike planned for Friday this week.

The results of another two ballots at Enfield in London and the Gateshead Metrocentre were due to be announced this week.

Six restaurants could be on strike from Friday 1 June.

“When we all come together and are unionised we are stronger,” said Natalie. “We will be heard across the hospitality sector.”

CIVIL SERVICE WORKERS

PCS union is ready for national ballot over pay

>>>continued from back page increases above 1 percent over four years in exchange for worse terms and conditions.

Some activists worry that this will mean members in the DWP will be less willing to strike against the pay cap.

Yet speaking in a personal capacity Steve West from the DWP GEC told Socialist Worker, “Whenever I speak to members they’re all up for a fight over pay.”

And Kate Douglas, from Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire DWP, told the conference that a strong campaign involving activists and members makes a crucial difference.

Deal

“Members in my branch feel very strongly about pay and feel quite let down by the four-year employee deal on pay,” she said.

“But since the indicative ballot last year my branch has worked really hard. We have recruited nine new reps since February alone. We’ve got membership density of 95 percent in some offices.”

She added, “Now is the time to fight. The government clearly is not going to move voluntarily.”

PCS general secretary Mark Serwotka told activists that a

strike vote wouldn’t just be “a mandate to protest as some form of letting off steam”.

He said members should “take a leaf from the lecturers in the UCU to take action that will have an effect that they cannot ignore.”

He added that a ballot would need to take place quickly to avoid being overtaken by annual pay talks. Yet he also said a strong ballot result could be “leverage” in talks.

Marianne told the HMRC conference, “Look at what we oppose—a Tory government in chaos. Brexit, Grenfell, Windrush. They’re a minority government propped up by the DUP.

“Could they really withstand sustained industrial action from the whole of the civil service?”

Serwotka said the union would wait for a response from the government and then “re-consult” members on taking action.

He also suggested the action could take the form of “targeted” strikes in the DVLA and the Border Force.

But the best way to show the government—and PCS members—that the union is serious about fighting would be to call immediate, hard hitting action involving the whole membership.

REFUSE WORKERS

A victory on Kirklees bins

UNISON UNION members working for Kirklees council’s refuse collection service appear to have won a significant victory in their long battle against alleged management bullying and racism.

Management met with union representatives after a big strike vote.

The bin workers voted for an initial five days of strikes starting on 4 June.

The council previously responded to workers’ grievances by threatening privatisation. Bosses were clearly terrified of the planned strikes and conceded to the six demands. Three managers have been

removed from the service while awaiting the outcome of an investigation.

Workers will also be paid for up to half of their outstanding leave which management had refused to let them take.

Managers have also accepted that current rounds are unworkable and will be reviewed. Workers voted to suspend their action subject to confirmation of the deal.

At a meeting workers expressed joy at their victory but were left wondering whether they should have asked for the “whole baker’s shop”.

Nick Ruff Kirklees Unison branch chair (pc)

TELECOMS

PROSPECT UNION reps at BT met last week to discuss their response to major job cuts.

The firm announced 13,000 job losses earlier this month.

Some 100 union reps attended Prospect’s BT divisional conference in Nottingham.

They voted to “keep all options open” in their campaign to defend jobs.

The “priorities” for the response to the cuts

include “campaigning for job security and actions to minimise compulsory redundancies and maximise the effectiveness of redeployment.”

BT has said it will create 6,000 more jobs in other grades. But this does not compensate for the cull of others.

The introduction to an emergency motion said, “BT’s plans to cut 13,000 jobs are unworkable, are not thought through. And it will

cause very serious damage to the company’s operations in both short term and longer terms.”

It’s difficult to see how anything but strikes can push back such a huge attack on workers.

BT had 240,000 workers when it was privatised in 1984.

It now has fewer than 100,000.

But shareholders’ dividends are being protected.

TRAFFIC WARDENS

TRAFFIC WARDENS in Hackney, east London, struck on Monday and Tuesday last week for a 5 percent pay rise.

They are also fighting for improvements to the long-service award, better holiday allocation and fair implementation of sickness procedures.

There were lively pickets, and a demonstration outside Hackney town hall.

They are outsourced by Hackney council to parking

management company APCOA. The action follows a 100 percent vote for strikes by the 40 wardens.

The Unite union members put in a claim for a 5 percent cost of living pay increase in April but bosses refused.

They are now fighting for proper pay negotiations every April. This is what would happen if these workers were still directly employed by local government instead of being outsourced.

EDUCATION

More colleges join fightback over pay

by SADIE ROBINSON

WORKERS AT two London colleges struck on Tuesday as part of a rolling programme of walkouts over pay.

The UCU union members at Lewisham Southwark College (LSC) and Lambeth College won support from students and other trade unionists on the picket lines.

It was the start of a two-day walkout for workers at LSC and a three-day strike for Lambeth workers.

UCU members are fighting a below-inflation 1 percent pay offer. But workers also have specific disputes at the different colleges.

As Joe, a striker at LSC explained, "We are the only college in London that doesn't have London weighting. We don't get any pay increments either."

"People leave to get better paid work elsewhere."

Striker and Esol teacher Sukriya added, "For the last ten years we've had no pay rise. And inflation has been going up."

"People are struggling to pay rent and bills, even those without children. No one can afford a holiday anymore."

The strikes come as new figures show that more than a third of college principals enjoyed pay rises of



SOLIDARITY FROM trade unionists at Lewisham Southwark College

PICTURE: SOCIALIST WORKER

10 percent or more in 2016/17. Some 17 of them "earned" over £200,000.

There was a sense that workers feel unappreciated and undervalued by bosses.

Support worker David was on strike and picketing for the first time. "Every day I feel quite used by the college,"

he said. "I've been here nine years, been pumped full of training and have had no real pay rise."

"To me, it's a slap in the face. I feel that I must be better than when I started."

And strikers said recent mergers have made things worse.

"Before the merger we

were promised the earth," said striker Ali. "We were told there would be more money and no more reorganisations."

"After the merger, suddenly there was no money. And we're now looking at another reorganisation. In the 15 years I've been here that will be the sixth."

UCU members at Westminster Kingsway, City and Islington and the College of Haringey, Enfield and North East London were set to walk out for three days from Wednesday.

And they plan a four-day strike from next Tuesday. Union members at Havering College are set to join the action with walkouts next Tuesday, Thursday and Friday.

Bosses at the Association of Colleges have said they won't negotiate over the 2018-19 pay claim if the strikes continue.

The UCU has asked branches to discuss a motion calling for a national ballot for escalating strikes over the claim.

A national response from the union can push back the bullying bosses. And solidarity from other trade unionists can boost workers' resolve.

For a full list of forthcoming college strikes go to ucu.org.uk/FEightsback

HULL COLLEGE



Confidence on the picket

PICTURE: ELEANOR WOYEN AND WENDY DOBBS

Buoyant walkout to stop cuts to jobs and courses

ANOTHER HUGE, lively and determined picket line assembled at the main entrance of Hull College on Thursday of last week.

It followed picketing at all college sites in the city at the start of a two-day strike over job losses and course cuts.

UCU union members had previously held a successful strike on Wednesday 9 May.

Workers are fighting a plan to cut 231 full time equivalent jobs.

Workers said they wanted students at Hull College to have the same opportunities as students who study elsewhere. They could escalate to a three-day strike if bosses don't back down.

This fight is crucial to safeguard education, jobs and pay. The college is a big employer in the area.

UCU joint branch secretary Dave Lancaster was pleased with the buoyant atmosphere on the large picket.

Striking catering workers provided food and drink while pickets were entertained with live music. Individuals and groups who

came to show their support were warmly welcomed. Dave said, "We're pushing the idea that it is for the community and future of the city of Hull."

Rob Goodfellow, joint branch secretary of the UCU at Hull College, told Socialist Worker, "Diana Johnson MP and Emma Hardy MP have both asked questions in parliament and Hardy is meeting with education minister Ann Milton."

The union believes that the management have shown ruthless and uncaring behaviour.

Another lecturer said, "This is an example of the marketisation of education."

"We are here because we recognise that this is another attack on the provision of education."

"The academisation of schools has led to decisions being based on profit and they should be based on the needs of children and young people. It also leads to a narrowing of the provision on offer."

Eleanor Woyen and Wendy Dobbs

AIRPORT WORKERS

Coordinated air strikes can ground the bosses' attacks at London Luton Airport

WORKERS AT London Luton airport are preparing to deliver a devastating blow to bosses in their fight against poverty pay and poor conditions.

Five different groups of workers, who work for three separate companies, are coordinating their action in a five-day series of rolling strikes.

Bosses are offering a pay increase of only 2.5 percent. But since the airport had a pre-tax profit of £44 million, Unite union members think they deserve more.

And Luton airport directors' money increased by 59 percent.

First to walk out are firefighters and security guards, who are both

Luton Airport north of London

employed directly by Luton airport. The firefighters plan to strike on Friday and Saturday of this week.

Then baggage handlers, who are outsourced to Menzies Aviation, plan to take action from 3am on 26 May until 2pm on Sunday 27 May. They voted by

92 percent to fight over pay, breaches of recognition agreement, poor working conditions and a lack of communication.

And they are followed by security staff—who voted 86 percent to strike—on Monday and Tuesday of next week. Air operations and engineering workers employed directly by the airport will also strike on Tuesday of next week.

And outsourced workers to Clece Care Service will round off the action by striking from 5am on 28 May until 5am on 30 May. They voted by 88 percent to strike over zero hours contracts, the living wage and allegations of management bullying.

ACTON HIGH SCHOOL

Stopping academisation can't be left to one school

THE NEU union has called off a planned three-day strike at Acton High school in Ealing, west London.

The strike was due to begin on Tuesday of this week, following a number of walkouts against a planned takeover of the school by the Ark academy chain.

NEU members are also in dispute over allegations of bullying and management's response to behaviour issues.

They overwhelmingly voted to call off the action at a meeting last week.

They won some things and didn't feel further strikes could win more.

Stefan Simms is divisional secretary of Ealing NEU (NUT section).

He told Socialist Worker,

"The strike wasn't in vain—we did win some things."

"The head and deputy head teacher have gone and the school is taking pupils' behaviour more seriously now."

"We did win some other minor concessions from Ark. But we set out to stop Ark taking over the school and we failed."

Hard

Stefan said that many teachers are now looking for jobs elsewhere because they don't want to work for Ark.

He added, "No matter how strong the union is in one school, it's hard for any school to resist a forced academy conversion in the face of government and local authority support for a particular sponsor."

HIGHER EDUCATION

Union wins recognition

THE UCU union has achieved a union recognition agreement with Coventry University Group (CUG) following a protest.

CUG is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Coventry University with worse pay and conditions.

CUG had previously refused to recognise the UCU and set up the Staff Consultative Group.

The union held a protest last Wednesday and threatened to call for an academic boycott of the university.

But a meeting last week reached an agreement in principle to have "voluntary recognition" of the UCU.

It isn't clear if the Staff Consultative Group will continue to operate.

STRIKE AGAINST WIGAN SELLOFF

by TOMÁŠ TENGEY-EVANS

THE FIGHT to stop outsourcing in Wigan, Wrightington and Leigh (WWL) NHS Trust is gaining momentum.

Around 600 hospital workers in the Unison union were set to walk out for 48 hours from Wednesday this week. Workers in the Unite union voted by 81 percent to join them on the picket lines.

Support is pouring in from trade unionists, health campaigners and local Labour Party members. Wigan trades council had called for mass solidarity throughout the walkout on Wednesday and Thursday.

Mary Callaghan, Wigan trades council president, sent workers a message of solidarity. “All delegates understand how you feel,” she said. “And we want you to know that not only ourselves, but the whole town is behind you in this very important dispute to keep your jobs in the NHS. “The whole of Greater Manchester is focused on the dispute here and the outcome could have a larger impact on the North West.”

The hospital workers are



WORKERS AND their supporters protested against privatisation in Lancashire last month

PICTURE: FRED FITTON

low-paid porters, cleaners, security staff and other support workers.

Bosses want to transfer their jobs into the newly set up WWL Solutions Ltd, one of the “wholly-owned subsidiaries” that manage estates in

NHS England. While owned by NHS trusts—for now—wholly-owned subsidiaries are the latest in a long line of privatisation scams. Dave Lowe, a Unison delegate at Wigan trades council, said, “There is absolutely no reason

for non medical staff to be employed by a separate, private company.

“That is unless there is a hidden political and economic agenda to ensure more resources are waylaid to the sort of people that have

messed up our railways.”

The immediate aim of wholly-owned subsidiaries is to drive down workers’ wages and terms and conditions. They may be protected for a short period for those who transfer to WWL Solutions—a

process known as Tupe. But any new starters will be on worse ones—starting a drive to the bottom. And, while working for a company owned by the NHS, the outsourced workers are no longer on the NHS pay roll.

Attractive

The lower wage bill will make it more attractive for private companies to swoop in at a later date.

The aim is to bring in private sector figures, make the NHS run like a business, then bring in full blown privatisation. And this is interwoven with a bigger agenda by the Tories and developers to get their hands on valuable NHS-owned land.

Private sector managers are being brought in to lay the groundwork for asset stripping the service.

In the face of this assault the WWL hospital workers are showing it’s possible to fight back. Their Unison and Unite unions should use their fight to launch a national campaign—with strikes at its heart—against outsourcing.

Send messages of solidarity to jean.heyse@wwl.nhs.uk

PCS UNION

Civil service workers’ conference votes for national strikes over pay

by NICK CLARK in Brighton

CIVIL SERVICE workers in the PCS union were set to take a step closer to strikes over pay as Socialist Worker went to press on Tuesday.

Delegates at the PCS’s annual conference were almost certain to overwhelmingly carry a motion to launch a national strike ballot.

Workers in government departments have suffered a pay freeze or 1 percent increases—well below inflation—for some eight years. And the Tories have told PCS to expect yet



PCS members voting at their annual conference

another real terms pay cut next year or sacrifice terms and conditions for a measly 2 or 3 percent.

PCS activists at department group conferences on Monday

had already begun rallying to launch the ballot.

Marianne Owens from the PCS’s HM Revenue and Customs group executive committee (GEC) told her conference, “We want the

pay rise that we deserve.

“We’re not going to accept changes to terms and conditions in return for a paltry 2 or 3 percent.

“That doesn’t come anywhere near what we’ve actually lost over the last decade.”

More than 50 percent of PCS members will need to take part in the ballot to lawfully strike—a result of Tory anti-union laws.

But activists can build a campaign to win a strike vote after a strong consultative ballot last year. More than

79 percent

voted to say they would be ready to strike, on a turnout of almost 49 percent—over 70,000 members.

Marianne said, “The consultative ballot was ground-breaking. Overall we just missed the

50 percent threshold, but it’s the biggest turnout we’ve had in a ballot in PCS’s history.

“Our activists and members are no different to the activists

and members in the CWU who achieved a 73 percent turnout in their recent strike ballot.

“We’re no different to the UCU where they had a magnificent 88 percent yes vote for strikes with a 58 percent turnout.

“We can see this 50 percent hurdle as a challenge. We need to go back to our branches and start to build.”

Activists in the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) group were also gearing up for a ballot.

A pay deal in 2016 saw some DWP workers get pay >>>turn to page 18

PCS union general secretary Mark Serwotka